This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

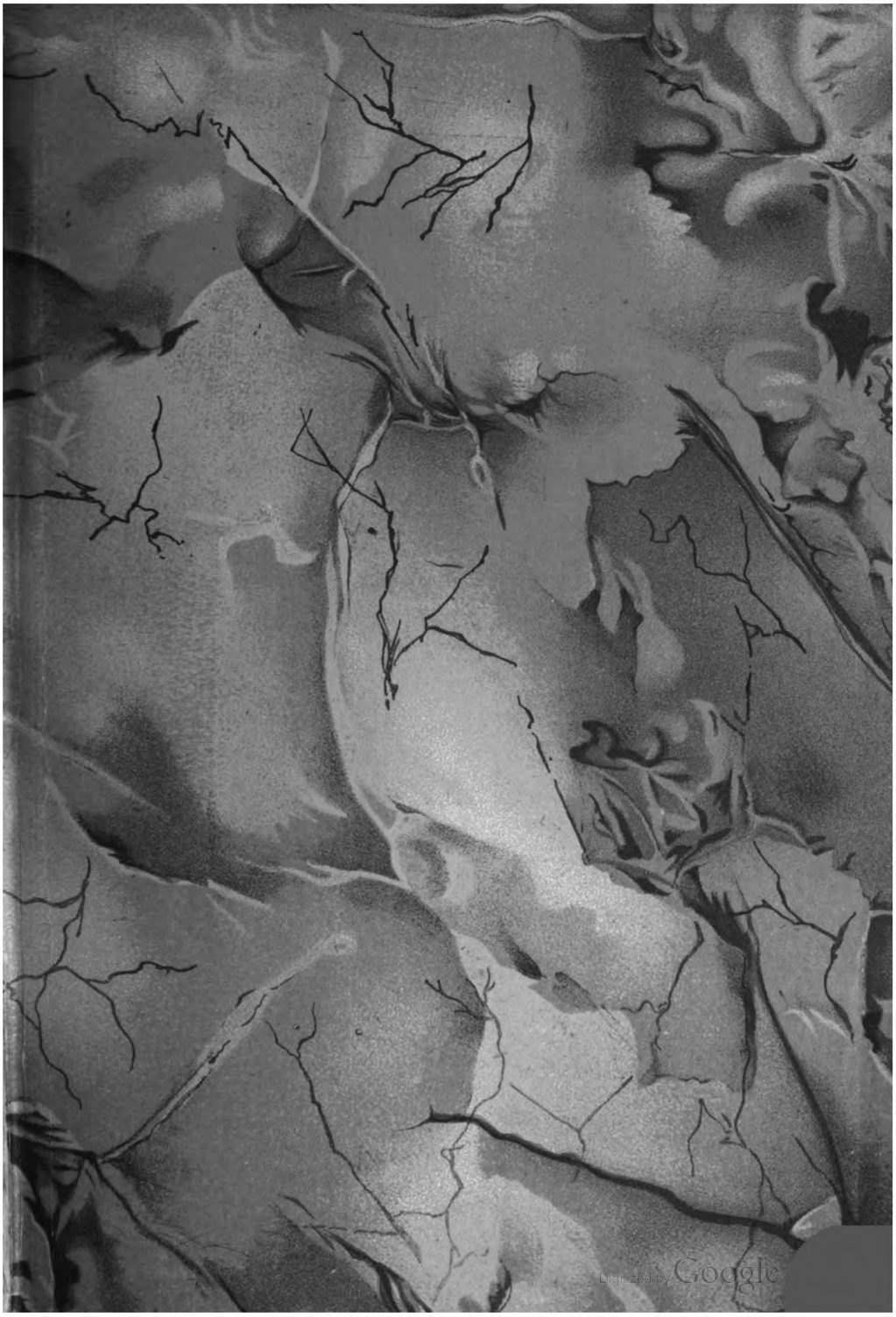
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

HD WIDENER
HW NNSZ T

Fr
1423
11.15

HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NAPOLEON
THE LAST PHASE

BY

LORD ROSEBERY

HARPER AND BROTHERS
NEW YORK & LONDON
1902

Digitized by Google

Fr. 1423.11.15

Copyright, 1900, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Literature	1
II.	Las Cases, Antommarchi, and Others	9
III.	Gourgaud	38
IV.	The Deportation	63
V.	Sir Hudson Lowe	73
VI.	The Question of Title	85
VII.	The Money Question	102
VIII.	The Question of Custody	109
IX.	Lord Bathurst	129
X.	The Dramatis Personæ	136
XI.	The Commissioners	150
XII.	The Emperor at Home	164
XIII.	The Conversations of Napoleon	180
XIV.	The Supreme Regrets	217
XV.	Napoleon and the Democracy	227
XVI.	The End	238
	Appendix	279

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NAPOLEON: THE LAST PHASE

CHAPTER I

THE LITERATURE

WILL there ever be an adequate life of Napoleon? Hitherto it has been scarcely worth while to ask the question, as we have been too near the prejudices and passions of his time for any such book to be written. Nor are we as yet very remote, for it may be noted that our present sovereign was all but two years old when Napoleon died, and that there are still probably in existence people who have seen him. Moreover, the Second Empire revived and reproduced these feelings in almost their original force, and the reaction from the Second Empire prolonged them. So we are still, perhaps, not sufficiently outside Napoleon's historical sphere of influence for such a book to be written.

Nor until recently did we possess anything like adequate materials. The pages and pages that follow Napoleon's name in library catalogues mainly represent compilations, or pamphlets, or lives conscientiously constructed out of dubious or inadequate materials, meagre bricks of scrannel straw. But now, under a government in France which opens

Digitized by Google

its records freely, and with the gradual publication of private memoirs, more or less authentic, we are beginning perhaps to see a possible limit to possible disclosure. The publication of the suppressed correspondence removes a reproach from the official publication, and fills its blanks. And the mania for Napoleonic literature which has prevailed for some years past, unaccompanied, strangely enough, by any sign of the revival of Bonapartism as a political force, has had the effect of producing a great supply to meet a greedy demand—a supply, indeed, by no means always unquestionable or unmixed, but at any rate out of the harvest of its abundance furnishing some grains of genuine fact.

The material, then, varied and massive as it is, seems to be ready for the hand of the destined workman, when he shall appear. And even he would seem not to be remote. In the great narrative of the relations of Napoleon and Alexander of Russia we wish to see his shadow projected. Is it too much to hope that M. Vandal will crown the services that he has rendered to history in that priceless work by writing at least the civil life of Napoleon? Might not he and M. Henri Houssaye, who has also done so much so well, jointly accomplish the whole?

We speak of a partnership, as we do not conceive it to be possible for any one man to undertake the task. For the task of reading and sifting the materials would be gigantic before a single word could be written. Nor, indeed, could any one man adequately deal with Napoleon in his military and his civil capacities. For Napoleon, says Metternich, a hostile judge, was born an administrator, a legislator, and a conqueror; he might have added, a statesman.

Digitized by Google

The conqueror of 1796-1812, and, it may be added, the defender of 1813 and 1814, would require a consummate master of the art of war to analyze and celebrate his qualities. Again, Napoleon the civilian would have to be treated, though not necessarily by different hands, as the statesman, the administrator, the legislator. Last of all, there comes the general survey of Napoleon as a man, one of the simplest character to his sworn admirers or sworn enemies, one of the most complicated to those who are neither.

And for this last study the most fruitful material is furnished in the six years that he spent at St. Helena, when he not merely recorded and annotated his career, but afforded a definite and consecutive view of himself. "Now," as he said there himself, "thanks to my misfortune, one can see me nakedly as I am." What he dictated in the way of autobiography and commentary has never perhaps received its just measure of attention. Some one has said somewhere that the memoirs he produced himself appear to be neglected because they are the primitive and authoritative documents, so far as he is concerned, of his life. People prefer to drink at any other source than the original; more especially do they esteem the memoirs of any who came, however momentarily, into contact with him. What the man himself thought or said of himself seems to most of those who read about Napoleon a matter of little moment. What they want to read is Bourrienne, or Rémusat, or Constant, or the like. They may, no doubt, allege that Napoleon's own memoirs are not so spicy as those of some of his servants, and that they are by no means to be always relied upon as unbiased records of fact. Still they remain as the direct deliberate declarations

Digitized by Google

of this prodigy as to his achievements, and they contain, moreover, commentaries on the great captains of the past—Cæsar, Frederic, and Turenne—which cannot be without serious interest to the historian or the soldier.

Nor must this indifference to truth count for too much in an estimate of Napoleon's character. Truth was in those days neither expected nor required in continental statesmanship—so little, indeed, that half a century afterwards Bismarck discovered it to be the surest means of deception. Napoleon's fiercest enemies, Metternich and Talleyrand, have now given us their memoirs. But we should be sorry to give a blind credence to these in any case where their personal interest was involved. Napoleon at St. Helena was, as it were, making the best case for himself, just as he was in the habit of doing in his bulletins. His bulletins represented what Napoleon desired to be believed. So did the memoirs. They are a series of Napoleonic bulletins on the Napoleonic career, neither more nor less.

But there is one distinction to be drawn. In writing his bulletins, Napoleon had often an object in deceiving. At St. Helena his only practical aim was to further the interests of his dynasty and his son. So that where these are not directly concerned the memoirs may be considered as somewhat more reliable than the bulletins.

The literature of St. Helena is fast accumulating, and must be within a measurable distance of completion. Eighty-four years have elapsed since a greedy public absorbed five editions of Warden's *Letters* in five months: seventy-eight since the booksellers were crowded with eager purchasers for

Digitized by Google

O'Meara's book. It is perhaps not too much to hope that his manuscript journal, which now sleeps in California, may soon be published in its entirety, for it is said to be full of vivid and original matter; while it might throw light on the discrepancies between his *Voice from St. Helena* and his private communications to the English officials at the Admiralty and at Plantation House.* Then we have had the voluminous batteries of Gourgaud, Montholon, and Las Cases (whose suppressed passages might also be safely produced, if, indeed, they exist, or ever existed) met by the ponderous defence of Forsyth and the more effective abstract of Seaton. We have had, too, the light artillery of Maitland and Glover, and Cockburn and Santini, and the madcap "Miss Betsy," who became Mrs. Abell. We have the histories of St. Helena by Barnes and Masselin. And in 1816, a former Governor, General Beatson, availed himself of the sudden interest in the island to launch on the public a massive quarto detailing its agricultural features with a minuteness which could scarcely be justified in the case of the Garden of Eden. We have the tragedy of Antommarchi, whatever that effort may be worth. Of late, too, the commissaries have taken the field; Montchenu, Balmain, and Sturmer have all yielded their testimony. So has Mme. de Montholon. Napoleon, indeed, urged his companions to record his utterances in journals, and frequently alluded to the result. "Yesterday evening," says Gourgaud, "the Emperor told me that I might turn my leisure to profit in writing

*Since this was written, portions have been published in the *Century* magazine, which make it abundantly clear that O'Meara skimmed off all the valuable matter for the *Voice*.

Digitized by Google

down his sayings: I would thus gain from 500 to 1000 louis a day." He was cognizant of the journal of Las Cases, which was dictated to or copied by St. Denis, one of the servants, whom Napoleon would sometimes question as to its contents. O'Meara's journal was read to him. He took it for granted that they all kept journals, and he was right. For, except the faithful Bertrand and the wife who divided with the Emperor his affection, none of the actors in that dreary drama have held their peace.

Lately, however, there have appeared two further contributions; and it may be considered that, while both are striking, one exceeds in interest all the previous publications of St. Helena, from the light that it throws on Napoleon's character. Lady Malcolm's *Diary of St. Helena* gives a vivid account of the Emperor's conversations with Sir Pulteney, and an impartial account of Lowe, which seems to turn the balance finally against that hapless and distracted official. But the second publication is in some respects not merely the most remarkable book relating to Napoleon at St. Helena, but to Napoleon at any time. It is the private diary of Gourgaud written entirely for his own eye, though the editors seem to think that the latter part at any rate may have been prepared for the possible detection of Lowe. But the great bulk was obviously prepared for no one except Gourgaud, since it could please no one else, and scarcely Gourgaud. It embodies, we believe, the truth as it appeared to the writer from day to day. It throws a strange light on the author, but a still newer light on his master. But when we have read it we feel a doubt of all the other records, and a conviction that this book is more nearly the unvar-

Digitized by Google

nished truth than anything else that has been put forth.

For there is one rule, to which we fear we can scarcely make an exception, which applies to all the Longwood publications: they are none of them wholly reliable. If we did make an exception, it would certainly be in favor of Gourgaud. And it may further be said that their veracity increases in proportion to the remoteness of their publication from the events to which they relate. Gourgaud, who is published in 1898, is more truthful than Montholon, who publishes in 1847; and Montholon, again, is more truthful than Las Cases, who publishes in 1823. Least of all, perhaps, to be depended on is O'Meara, who published in 1822. In all these books, except, perhaps, the latest, there are gross instances of misrepresentation and fabrication. And yet to accuse all these authors of wanton unveracity would not be fair. It was rarely, if ever, wanton. Partly from idolatry of Napoleon, partly to keep up a dramatic representation of events at St. Helena, and so bring about his liberation, facts were omitted or distorted which in any way reflected on their idol or tended to mar the intended effects. There seems to have been something in the air of St. Helena that blighted exact truth; and he who collates the various narratives on any given point will find strange and hopeless contradictions. Truth probably lurks in Forsyth, but the crushing of the ore is a hideous task; and, for various other reasons, it is equally difficult to find in the more contemporary narratives. There is a strange mildew that rests on them all, as on the books and boots in the island. One has to weigh each particle of evidence and bear in mind the char-

Digitized by Google

acter of the witness. Sometimes, indeed, we may be charged with having quoted from sources which we have described as tainted. We could scarcely quote from any others. But where the testimony seems of itself probable, and where no object but truth is perceptible in it, we have no choice but to cite from what documents there are.

One striking circumstance remains to be noticed. Of the last three years of Napoleon's life we know scarcely anything. From the departure of Gourgaud, in March, 1818, to the end of May, 1821, we know practically nothing. We know what the English outside reported. We have an authorized, but not very trustworthy, record from within. But, in reality, we know nothing, or next to nothing.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

LAS CASES, ANTOMMARCHI, AND OTHERS

THE book of Las Cases, which is the most massive, and perhaps the most notorious, is not without a certain charm of its own. First published in eight volumes, it was subsequently compressed, and under the title of *Memorial of St. Helena*, adorned with the quaint and spirited designs of Charlet, has obtained a world-wide circulation. Las Cases is said, indeed, though no doubt with much exaggeration, to have realized from it no less a sum than eighty thousand pounds. It is alleged to have been written in daily entries, and to supply an exact report of Napoleon's conversation. Much, however, is declared by the author to have been lost, partly from want of time for transcription; something, perhaps, from the vicissitudes of his papers. What he narrates is told with spirit, and even eloquence, and when corroborated by other authority may be taken to be a faithful transcript of the Emperor's talk as he wished it to be reported, or at any rate of his dictations. But, when uncorroborated, it is wholly unreliable. For, putting on one side the usual exaggerations about diet, restrictions, and so forth, and making full allowance for the author's being too dazzled by Napoleon (whom he sincerely adored) to see quite clearly, there is a fatal blot on his book. It is an arsenal of spurious docu-

Digitized by Google

ments. How this has come about, whether from the fertile invention of Las Cases, or by the connivance and inspiration of Napoleon, it is not possible definitely to pronounce. At any rate, four such fabricated letters are printed at length in Las Cases's book, and he must be held responsible for a fifth, which is nowhere printed, and which probably had but a transient existence.

The fabrication of the first of these has been clearly and categorically set forth by Count Murat in his excellent book, *Murat, Lieutenant de l'Empereur en Espagne*. The charge is there established that Las Cases, in order to lay the blame of his hero's Spanish policy on Murat, inserted in his book a fabricated letter of the date of March 29, 1808. By whom the letter was composed does not appear. But that it is a fabrication is certain, and the responsibility for its production rests on Las Cases. Count Murat accumulates damning proofs. He points out the irresolution of the despatch, and the orders that the French armies should perpetually retreat before the Spaniards, as wholly alien to the Napoleonic character. He points out the incessant inconsistencies with passages of authentic despatches written at the same time. On the 27th of March Napoleon had written to Murat to bid him make an imposing display of force in Madrid. In the spurious despatch, dated the 29th, he disapproves of his being in Madrid at all. It is known, moreover, that the news of Murat's occupation of Madrid did not reach the Emperor till the 30th. The despatch is not in the form with which Napoleon addressed Murat. The drafts, or minutes, of practically all Napoleon's despatches are in existence. There is no minute of this. Na-

Digitized by Google

poleon, in his other despatches, never alludes to this one. Murat never acknowledges its receipt. Murat's minute register of letters received and sent contains no allusion to it. How, in any case, did it suddenly make its appearance at St. Helena? It seems useless to accumulate proofs that a more audacious fabrication has seldom been presented to the public. The editors of the imperial correspondence, indeed, blush as they print it, for they append a note stating that neither the draft, nor the original, nor any authentic copy, is discoverable. Savary, Beausset, and Thibaudeau blindly accept the letter on the authority of Las Cases. Méneval, who was at the time Napoleon's private secretary, anticipates the doubts of Count Murat, and details some material circumstances which vitiate the letter, one of them being that, though the letter is dated from Paris, Napoleon at that time was at St. Cloud. Méneval says that he cannot solve the mystery, though his arguments all point irresistibly to fabrication; his only argument the other way—a very dangerous one—is that no one but Napoleon could have composed it. The perplexity of Méneval, when his confidential position is considered, is extremely significant, if not conclusive. Thiers thinks that Napoleon wrote it, and wrote it on the professed date, but admits that the letter was never sent. His reasons for this strange theory cannot be examined here, but they appear to be the mere result of a desperate effort to prove the authenticity of the letter, in spite of overwhelming difficulties stated by himself. Montholon prints it among a number of other letters which he says were handed to him by the Emperor. This casts doubt on the narrative of Montholon as well.

Digitized by Google

But the primary and original responsibility must rest with Las Cases. And it is a little unfortunate that Las Cases piqued himself on his skill in composition. He tells us that he drew up Napoleon's protest at Plymouth. He drew up innumerable protests of his own. "Once a correspondence established with Sir H. Lowe," he says, with ominous pleasantry, "I did not remain idle." He rained documents on the governor. Deported to the Cape, he never stopped writing: the governor of that settlement, the ministers, the Prince Regent—all had to endure him. Returning to Europe, he bombards every sovereign or minister that he can think of. Last of all, the patient reader who ploughs through his eight volumes has ample reason to feel that Las Cases would like nothing better than to pen a few Napoleonic despatches to keep himself in exercise. We should not, on this instance alone, definitely pronounce that Las Cases deliberately fabricated the letter to Murat; for it might have been an academical exercise, or there might have been confusion among his papers, or lapse of memory. There are strange freaks of this kind on record.

But, unfortunately, this is by no means the only effort or lapse of Las Cases in this direction. In the fifth part of his journal he gives in much the same way a letter from Napoleon to Bernadotte, dated August 8, 1811. It is entirely ignored by the editors of the imperial correspondence. It is, however, inserted in the *Lettres inédites de Napoléon I.*, but "with every reserve," for the editors do not know its source. Had they known it, they would no doubt have rejected it, as had the former editors. They take it at second hand from Martel's *Œuvres Litté-*

Digitized by Google

raires de Napoléon Bonaparte. Martel, who does not name his authority, evidently took it from Las Cases.

Again, in his sixth volume, Las Cases generously produces from his occult and unfailing store another state document. This time it is a letter addressed by Napoleon to his brother, Louis, King of Holland, on April 3, 1808, from the palace of Marrac. It bears all the mint marks of the others. It is found for the first time in Las Cases's book. No draft of it is in existence, a fact which is in itself fatal. Unluckily, too, Napoleon did not arrive at Marrac till fourteen days after April 3. The editors of the Emperor's correspondence print it with this dry remark, and with an ominous reference to Las Cases as the sole authority. M. Rocquain, in his *Napoléon et le Roi Louis* (p. 166, note), unhesitatingly dismisses it as in the main, if not wholly, a fraud. We see no reason for accepting any part as genuine, nor, indeed, does M. Rocquain supply any.

In his seventh volume, again, there is a fourth letter, of the authorship of which it may confidently be said, *Aut Las Cases, aut Diabolus.* It purports to be instructions for an anonymous plenipotentiary on a mission in Poland, and it is dated April 18, 1812. This composition is absolutely ignored by the official editors of the imperial correspondence. It is, as usual, suddenly produced by Las Cases as a revelation of the real motives of the Russian expedition. The real motive of that disastrous war, it seems, was the reconstruction of the ancient kingdom of Poland. When we consider that at that juncture, when the revival was passionately sought by the Poles, eagerly desired by his own army, and by some of his most devoted servants, when it was vital to his strategy

Digitized by Google

and to his policy, when it was clearly dictated by the commonest gratitude and humanity towards Poland, Napoleon resolutely refused it, we may judge of the value and authenticity of this document.

The fifth fabrication, which we are not privileged even to see, is the most remarkable, and the most impudent, of all. In a moment of disinterested friendship Las Cases drew from his manuscript hoards, to show to Warden, a letter from the Duc d'Enghien to Napoleon which was written on the eve of his execution, and which was suppressed by Talleyrand for fear Napoleon should be moved by it to spare him. Las Cases appears to have had a monopoly of this document, for no one except himself and those to whom he showed it ever had the singular good fortune to see or even to hear of it. His own statement with regard to the Enghien affair is, perhaps, the most nebulous in his whole book, and he only makes a timid and transient allusion to the letter which he had shown so exultantly to Warden. Warden's language is so remarkable that it deserves quotation: "I saw a copy of this letter in possession of Count de Las Cases, which he calmly represented to me *as one of the mass of documents formed or collected to authenticate and justify certain mysterious parts of the history* which he was occasionally employed in writing under the dictation of the hero of it." Let us follow up for a moment the subsequent history of the letter of the Duc d'Enghien intercepted by Talleyrand and providentially preserved by Las Cases. In the *Letters from the Cape*, composed, inspired, or revised by Napoleon, this letter is mentioned, for the author had "frequent opportunities of cursorily running over manuscripts of the greatest interest relative to the

Digitized by Google

memorable events of the last twenty years, a part of which was even written from the dictation of *Napoleon* himself"; in other words, Napoleon, who is the author of the *Letters*, has access to manuscripts dictated by himself. "When the Duc d'Enghien had arrived at Strasburg, he wrote a letter to Napoleon, in which he stated 'that his rights to the crown were very distant; that for a length of time his family had lost their claims: and promised, if pardon was granted to him, to discover everything he knew of the plot of enemies of France, and to serve the First Consul faithfully.' This letter was not presented by Talleyrand to Napoleon until it was too late. The young prince was no more." The author goes on to say that in the manuscript, which he had been privileged to see, Napoleon states that "perhaps, if this letter had been presented in time, the political advantages which would have accrued from his declarations and his services would have decided the First Consul to pardon him." This extract is interesting as containing the only portion of the text of this remarkable document which has been preserved. Rumors of this precious letter appear to have been cautiously spread about Longwood, and to have excited the curiosity of that portion of the household which had not been admitted to the confidence of Las Cases. O'Meara appears especially to have distinguished himself by a pertinacious spirit of investigation. In January, 1817, he represents himself as asking the Emperor questions with regard to it. "I now asked if it were true that Talleyrand had retained a letter from the Duc d'Enghien to him until two days after the Duke's execution? Napoleon's reply was: 'It is true; the Duke had written a

Digitized by Google

letter, offering his services, and asking a command in the army from me, which that *scelerato* Talleyrand did not make known until two days after his execution.' I observed that Talleyrand, by his culpable concealment of the letter, was virtually guilty of the death of the Duke. 'Talleyrand,' replied Napoleon, 'is a *briccone*, capable of any crime.'"

Two months later, in March, O'Meara mentions to Napoleon that a book has been published respecting him, by Warden, which was exciting great interest. The book had not then arrived, but there were extracts from it in the newspapers. Napoleon sits down to read the newspapers, asks the explanation of a few passages, and at once inquires what Warden had said of the affair of the Duc d'Enghien. "I replied that he asserted that Talleyrand had detained a letter from the Duke for a considerable time after his execution, and that he attributed his death to Talleyrand. '*Di questo non c'è dubbio*' (of this there is no doubt), replied Napoleon." Later in the month Napoleon reiterates this statement to O'Meara. "When he (the Duc d'Enghien) arrived at Strasburg, he wrote a letter to me in which he offered to discover everything if pardon were granted to him, said that his family had lost their claims for a long time, and concluded by offering his services to me. The letter was delivered to Talleyrand, who concealed it until after his execution." This seems succinct enough, but O'Meara wished to make assurance doubly sure. So in April he "asked Napoleon again, as I was anxious to put the matter beyond a doubt, whether, if Talleyrand had delivered the Duc d'Enghien's letter in time to him, he would have pardoned the writer. He replied, 'It is prob-

Digitized by Google

able that I might, for in it he made an offer of his services; besides, he was the best of the family.'" It is noteworthy that, although Napoleon speaks more than once to Gourgaud about the Enghien affair, he never mentions the letter to that critical and incredulous officer. Finally, the whole bubble, blown assiduously by Warden, O'Meara, and the *Letters from the Cape*, ignominiously bursts. The letter disappears, and with it the charge against Talleyrand. The narrative is brought back to historical truth by placing on record the well-known note of the Duc d'Enghien written on the report of his trial. Montholon has to engineer this remarkable metamorphosis. It is, of course, impossible to perform this task with success, but the hapless equerry extracts himself from it with something less than grace or probability. He tells us that after O'Meara's departure the surgeon's journal was left with him, and that he was in the habit of reading it aloud to his master. The Emperor, he says, pointed out some errors in the manuscript. And it seems a pity that Montholon does not place on record what these errors were, for the only statement which is corrected is that thrice solemnly made by O'Meara on the authority of Napoleon himself. We must quote textually what is said about it: "M. O'Meara dit que M. de Talleyrand intercepta une lettre écrite par le Duc d'Enghien quelques heures avant le jugement. La vérité est que le Duc d'Enghien a écrit sur le procès verbal d'interrogatoire, avant de signer: 'Je fais avec instance la demande d'avoir une audience particulière du premier consul. Mon nom, mon rang, ma façon de penser et l'horreur de ma situation, me font espérer qu'il ne refusera pas ma demande.'"

Digitized by Google

This, of course, is what the Duc d'Enghien did actually write. Then Montholon proceeds, "Malheureusement l'Empereur n'eut connaissance de ce fait qu'après l'exécution du jugement. L'intervention de M. de Talleyrand dans ce drame sanglant est déjà assez grande sans qu'on lui prête un tort qu'il n'a pas eu."

We regret to declare that we do not consider this contradiction as any more authentic than the letter from the Duc d'Enghien, written at Strasburg, offering his services, and asking for a command of the army, which Talleyrand intercepted for fear it should melt Napoleon's heart. The fact and purport of that letter are clearly set forth by Warden, who saw the letter; by Las Cases, who showed it to him; by O'Meara, who twice asked Napoleon about it; by Napoleon himself, in the *Letters from the Cape;* and the main point of the story is not the appeal of the Duke, but the infamy of Talleyrand, who suppressed it. Warden published the first statement in 1816; the *Cape Letters* appeared in 1817; O'Meara in 1822; Las Cases in 1824. At last, in 1847, thirty years after the statement was first published, appears Montholon's book. By this time the whole story has been hopelessly exploded. A host of elucidatory pamphlets have been published. What has not been published is the document itself, which, so assiduously advertised, has never seen the light. So Montholon has to make the best of a bad job, and get rid somehow of this abortive fiction. As we have said, he conjures up an episode in which he reads O'Meara's composition to the Emperor, when the Emperor corrects several errors. Montholon, however, only records one correction, which is

Digitized by Google

not a correction at all, but an absolute denial of the whole story, and an explicit acquittal of Talleyrand. The statements in Warden's book, which form the text of Napoleon's remarks to O'Meara in March, 1817, and the categorical assertion in the *Letters from the Cape*, which were composed by Napoleon himself, Montholon does not, and cannot, touch. It is no doubt true that Napoleon did not see the last words which Enghien wrote before his execution took place. But these were not a letter written from Strasburg, nor were they an application for a post in the French army, nor were they intercepted by Talleyrand. It is noteworthy that, so far from the Duc d'Enghien soliciting employment under Napoleon, we know from Savary that the Duke's fatal admission at his trial was that he had asked to serve in the British army. We admire Montholon's loyal spirit, but we think he might have effected the retreat from an impossible position with something more of skill, and veiled it with more probability.

As to Talleyrand, his share in the Enghien affair, though no doubt obscure, is certainly not open to this particular charge. Strangely enough, and most unfortunately for Las Cases, Napoleon in his own hand left an express acquittal of Talleyrand. Méneval transcribes from the autograph notes of Napoleon on the history of Fleury de Chaboulon the following lines: "Prince Talleyrand behaved on this occasion as a faithful minister, and the Emperor has never had any reproach to make to him with regard to it." Talleyrand's complicity or connivance does not fall to be discussed here; that is a very different matter. But this note expressly contradicts the charge of perfidy which we are discussing, and

Digitized by Google

which is the essence of the charge preferred by Las Cases.

Finally, it is to be noted that on his death-bed the Emperor, provoked by an attack in an English review on Savary and Caulaincourt in connection with this incident, calls for his will, and inserts in it the following sentence: "I had the Duc d'Enghien arrested and tried because it was necessary for the safety, interest, and honor of the French people, when the Comte d'Artois was, avowedly, maintaining sixty assassins in Paris. Under the same circumstances, I should do the same again." This we believe to be the truth, though not perhaps the whole truth.

We have, then, we confess, a profound distrust of this mass of illustrative documents collected by Las Cases. We cannot, indeed, call to mind a single letter (except the various protests) which is given by Las Cases, and which is genuine, except the farewell letter of Napoleon to Las Cases himself. Strangely enough, such is the fatality attaching to letters in this collection, Gourgaud gives a totally different version even of this one; yet Gourgaud read it under circumstances that would have stamped it on his memory. In this case, however, the version of Las Cases is supported by Lowe, and is no doubt the true one.

Whence came all these documents? When and where was "the mass of documents formed or collected to justify certain mysterious parts of the history" of the Emperor's reign? Are we to understand that Napoleon hurriedly culled them at the Élysée or Malmaison after Waterloo—a letter to Louis, a letter to Murat, a letter to Bernadotte—from

Digitized by Google

his enormous correspondence? We know that the letters which he considered at that time of most importance he confided to his brother Joseph: they were bound in volumes. How, then, did he come to have these sparse, but notable, despatches about him? Las Cases could only, if they were genuine, have obtained them from Napoleon, and Las Cases was not in the confidence of Napoleon till long after the Emperor was cut off from his papers. Whence, then, come these casket letters? Las Cases could tell us, but does not: and no one else can. The only hint we obtain is from Gourgaud, who, speaking of some false statement of Warden's, says that it is probably *une partie du journal faux de Las Cases,* from which we may conclude that Las Cases kept a spurious record for the information of curious strangers and the public, and that this was known at Longwood.

And here we must say, with deep regret, that we wish we could feel certain that Napoleon was ignorant of these fabrications. There would be perhaps, if we could shut our eyes to the evidence of the authorship of the *Letters from the Cape,* or if we chose to take that pamphlet as a sort of trial-balloon sent forth by the Emperor, but not intended to carry his authority, no absolutely direct or reliable evidence of connection. Unfortunately, there is no doubt as to the authorship of the *Letters from the Cape.* Montholon, moreover, gives the spurious letters to Murat in the midst of a narrative of Spanish affairs dictated by Napoleon. Napoleon is recorded as saying: "On the 29th of May I wrote to the Grand Duke of Berg," as follows. And then follows the spurious letter. If, then, we can implicitly trust Montholon, Napoleon

Digitized by Google

declared the letter to be genuine. But we do not implicitly trust Montholon. We have, however, described the relations of Napoleon, as set forth by the chroniclers, to the imaginary Enghien letter. We can hardly, then, acquit Napoleon of having been cognizant of these documents. Las Cases, in his journal, constantly treats us to comet showers of asterisks, which he assures us represent conversations with Napoleon of the utmost moment and mystery. Possibly mystifications may have been concocted at these dark interviews, and if Las Cases kept any record of what then passed, it would be well to publish it. Nor is it easy to understand that the idolater would venture to take such liberties without at least a sign from the idol. It must, moreover, be mentioned that an officer on board the *Northumberland* records that Napoleon was heard, in dictation to Las Cases, saying that he had received proofs of Enghien's innocence, and an application from Enghien for employment, after the Duke's execution. Thiers, again, following the less emphatic opinion of Méneval, positively declares that there can be no doubt, from the evidence of the style, that the letter to Murat was composed by the Emperor. This is a damning admission, if the authority of Thiers be accepted, for no one can now believe that that letter was written on the alleged date. On the other hand, Thiers is by no means infallible. Moreover, is it possible, to put things on the lowest ground, that Napoleon would associate himself with tricks so certain of discovery? Unless, indeed, what is not impossible, he allowed them to be launched, careless of the future, or of the verdict of history, in order to produce a momentary impression in his favor; just as he is said in the days of his power to have

Digitized by Google

published in the *Moniteur* fictitious despatches from his marshals.

We offer no judgment: we care to go no further: our object is not to follow up the track further than to demonstrate the unreliability of Las Cases. And we think we have said enough to show that these various fabrications lie like a bar sinister athwart the veracity of his massive volumes, and make it impossible to accept any of his statements, when he has any object in making them.

This being so, it is not necessary to point out minor and less elaborate inaccuracies. Pasquier, for example, complains that Las Cases gives a wholly imaginary account of the interview which Pasquier had with Napoleon on becoming prefect of police. But the responsibility for this misstatement does not, probably, lie with Las Cases. He also signalizes two other misrepresentations of the same kind, but it is scarcely worth while to multiply instances.

We have, however, a further, though very minor, objection to this author, in that he is a book-maker of an aggravated description. No sort of padding comes amiss to him. Nevertheless, the book is not without interest, and even value; for there are many cases in which he has no interest to serve, and where he records at length habits and remarks of Napoleon which we find nowhere else, the genuineness of which must be decided by internal evidence or probability. Las Cases, too, is by far the most Boswellian of the biographers, the most minute, the most insensible to ridicule, and in that respect affords some amusement. Some, indeed, of his sublimer flights hover perilously near the other extreme; as, for example, when he feels an indescribable emotion on seeing Napoleon

Digitized by Google

rub his stomach. The Emperor has some coffee for breakfast, which he enjoys. "Quelques moments plus tard il disait, en se frottant l'estomac de la main, qu'il en sentait le bien là. Il serait difficile de rendre mes sentiments à ces simples paroles."

Again, Napoleon tells him that when speaking to Lowe he became so angry that he felt a vibration in the calf of his left leg, which is one of his portentous symptoms, and one which he had not felt for years.

Again, Las Cases records, in the true Boswellian strain, that Napoleon had called him a simpleton, consoling him with the assurance that he always meant the epithet as a certificate of honesty.

Again, Las Cases speaks with rapture of the absence of all personal feeling in Napoleon. "He sees things so completely in the mass, and from so great a height, that men escape him. Never has one surprised him in any irritation against any of those of whom he has had most to complain." Were it possible on other grounds to give complete credit to the narrative of Las Cases, this stupendous assertion would make us pause.

The memoirs of Montholon are, like the author, eminently suave and gentlemanlike. O'Meara accuses him, in private letters to the English staff, of being untruthful, and O'Meara should be a good judge. We do not doubt that where they bear upon the general strategy of Longwood they are unreliable, like all the publications within thirty years of Napoleon's death, though it should be remembered that they appeared late, not till 1847. Nor are the dates given always exact; and this inaccuracy gives the impression that the entries may have been written up some time afterwards. It is sufficiently obvious,

Digitized by Google

indeed, that portions of the book are insertions long subsequent to the exile. But, on questions where the credit of Napoleon or his ill-treatment is not involved, they may be read with interest. Nor can we avoid commending the tone, which is due, no doubt, to the date of publication. A quarter of a century had cooled many passions and allayed many feuds. Gourgaud had ceased to rage, and had amicably co-operated with Montholon in the production of the Emperor's memoirs. Hence, Montholon has not a word against Gourgaud, or even reflecting on Gourgaud, at a time when that fretful porcupine must have been making his life almost intolerable. Indeed, at the time of Gourgaud's challenge, there is simply a blank of ten days. Whether this judicious reticence is due to anguish of mind, or whether, what is not impossible, the whole transaction was what our ancestors would have called a flam, or whether, on consideration, the entries were cancelled, it is impossible now to say. We incline to the last hypothesis, and regret, now that Gourgaud's journal is published, that Montholon's cannot, as a counter-blast, be given in its entirety. We know that he left in manuscript a great mass of notes of conversation. One at least of these, the record of a monologue of Napoleon's on March 10, 1819, has been published, and exceeds in interest anything in Montholon's book. It is greatly to be desired that these notes should be unreservedly given to the world. Were this done, we might have a record not inferior in interest to that of Gourgaud. What we chiefly regret about the book as it stands are the obvious suppressions, due, no doubt, to blind veneration for Napoleon's memory, and to solicitude for the politi-

Digitized by Google

cal interests of Napoleon's nephew. It languishes, moreover, just when it would have been most fruitful—that is, after the departure of the other chroniclers, Las Cases, O'Meara, and Gourgaud, when we have nothing else to depend upon, except the imaginative excursions of Antommarchi.

For, in the last days of all, we are left mainly to Antommarchi, and no one of the chroniclers is less reliable. He was a young Corsican anatomist of some distinction, and arrived in St. Helena eighteen months before Napoleon's death. As a Corsican, selected by Cardinal Fesch, he should have been agreeable to the Emperor. But he was unlucky, for on several occasions he was absent when Napoleon wanted his aid. Moreover, his illustrious patient, who in any case did not love physicians, thought him too young and inexperienced. And, according to Montholon, Antommarchi treated the illness of Napoleon as trifling, and even feigned. Yet Montholon speaks well of him, as "an excellent young man," and has no conceivable object for misrepresenting him. When, in March, 1821, Napoleon complains of feeling internal stabs, as of a pen-knife, caused by the hideous disease which had then almost killed him, Antommarchi laughs. Nothing, says Montholon, will make him believe, within seven weeks of the end, in the gravity, or even in the reality, of Napoleon's condition. He is persuaded that the illness is only a political game, played with the intention of persuading the English government to bring the Emperor back to Europe. He declares, with a smile of incredulity, on March 20th, that Napoleon's pulse is normal. On March 21st, however, he recognizes the seriousness of the situation, and declares that he sees

Digitized by Google

undeniable signs of gastritis. Napoleon thereupon consents, with great reluctance, to take some lemonade with an emetic. Next day, therefore, a quarter of a grain of tartar emetic was administered in some lemonade. The patient was violently sick, and rolled on the earth in agony. What the agony must have been, when we remember the ulcers which were internally devouring him, we can scarcely conceive. Antommarchi says that the effect is too strong, but that it is a necessary remedy. Napoleon, however, absolutely refuses any further medicine of the kind. Next day he ordered his servant to bring him a glass of lemonade; but the young doctor was on the watch, and craftily inserted the same dose of his favorite remedy. Napoleon smelt something strange, and gave it to Montholon, who in ten minutes was horribly sick. The Emperor was naturally furious, called Antommarchi an assassin, and declared that he would never see him again.

For some time past the young Corsican had been weary of his confinement and his attendance on one whom he considered an imaginary invalid. He spent much of his time in Jamestown, or outside the limits, to the disgust of the orderly who was forced to accompany him. Finally, in January, 1821, he signified to Sir Thomas Reade his intention of leaving the Emperor's service and the island. On January 31, 1821, he wrote to Montholon that he desired to return to Europe, and that he felt with regret his inability to gain the Emperor's confidence. Napoleon at once gave his consent in a letter, which Montholon truly characterizes as *bien dure*. We quote the concluding paragraph: "During the fifteen months that you have spent on the island you have not made

Digitized by Google

His Majesty feel any confidence in your moral character; you can be of no use to him in his illness, and so there is no object in prolonging your stay here." In spite of this scathing sentence, Bertrand and Montholon patched up a reconciliation, and on February 6th Antommarchi was permitted to resume his service. On March 23d, as we have seen, there was another quarrel, and Montholon records that on March 31st Napoleon refused to allow his name to be even mentioned. However, on April 3d he was allowed to be present at Dr. Arnott's visit. On April 8th, being again absent when summoned, he is formally told that the Emperor will never see him again. On April 9th he went to Sir Hudson Lowe to request permission to return to Europe—twenty-six days before Napoleon's death. Lowe said that he must refer the matter to England. On April 16th Arnott insisted that Napoleon should once more receive Antommarchi. On April 17th Napoleon dictates a letter, which he insists on Antommarchi signing as a condition of remaining, as the doctor had been accused of idle gossip and jests as to his master's habits. On April 18th he is once more allowed to accompany Arnott to the patient's room. On April 21st, however, the English doctors hold a consultation without him; and when Montholon wishes to summon him on April 29th, Napoleon twice angrily refuses. For the first five days of May, the last five days of life, he is allowed to watch in the room adjacent to the sick-room. In the last agony, whenever he tries to moisten the lips of the dying man, Napoleon repels him and signs to Montholon. Finally, on May 5th Napoleon dies, and, alone of all his attendants, omits Antommarchi from his will.

Digitized by Google

Why recall all this so minutely? For the simple reason that there is not a word of it in Antommarchi's book. That work, on the contrary, records nothing but the single-minded devotion of the physician, and the affectionate gratitude of the patient. For example, on the day on which Napoleon twice refused to see him, he records that the patient reluctantly accepted one of his remedies, and declared, "You can measure by my resignation the gratitude I feel for you." Napoleon, declares the doctor, added confidential directions about his funeral—that it was to be, failing Paris, at Ajaccio, and, failing Ajaccio, near the spring in St. Helena. On the 26th of March, when Napoleon would have none of him, Antommarchi represents himself as persuading Napoleon to see Arnott. Montholon says that it was on the 31st that Napoleon first consented that Arnott should be sent for, and adds, "As for Antommarchi, he persists in forbidding that his very name should be mentioned." Daily he records minute symptoms, and elaborate, affectionate conversations with his patient. But not a word of his being forbidden the door, or of his contemptuous dismissal, or of his efforts to leave the island. Yet the two volumes which contain his record of eighteen months would have sufficed to find room for this. It is not possible that Montholon should be guilty of gratuitous falsehood with regard to him. Montholon is well disposed towards Antommarchi; his statements are supported both by documentary evidence and by the testimony of Lowe. No; we must take the Antommarchian narrative for what it is worth, and that is very little. For our own part, we accept with great misgiving any of his uncorroborated statements. How, for example, can we

Digitized by Google

credit that, in the midst of this period of distrust and aversion, Napoleon should have harangued him in this fashion: "When I am dead, each of you will have the sweet consolation of returning to Europe. You will see again, the one your relations, the other your friends, and I shall find my braves in the Elysian Fields. Yes," he continued, raising his voice, "Kléber, Desaix, Bessières, Duroc, Ney, Murat, Massena, Berthier, all will come to meet me: they will speak to me of what we have done together. I will narrate to them the later events of my life. In seeing me they will become mad with enthusiasm and glory. We will talk of our wars to the Scipios, the Hannibals, the Cæsars, the Fredericks, etc." This fustian, of which Napoleon could scarcely have been guilty before his delirium, is supposed to have been delivered to an audience of two, Antommarchi and Montholon — Antommarchi, who was in disgrace, and Montholon, who, though he hung on his master's words, does not even mention so remarkable a speech. We may safely aver that this is not what Napoleon said, but what Antommarchi considers that Napoleon ought to have said.

One service Antommarchi rendered, which almost outweighs his worthless and mendacious book. He took a cast of Napoleon's face after his death. The original of this, now in England, represents the exquisite and early beauty of the countenance, when illness had transmuted passion into patience, and when death, with its last serene touch, had restored the regularity and refinement of youth. All who beheld the corpse were struck by this transformation. "How very beautiful!" was the exclamation of the Englishmen who beheld it. But Antommarchi had

Digitized by Google

to fight even for the authenticity of his cast. The phrenologists fell on him and rent him. They declared that the skull had not the bumps, or the bony developments, requisite for a hero. Others averred that it was rather the face of the First Consul than of the Emperor, which is true. Others remembered that Antommarchi had not produced the cast till late in 1830. We can only sum up our conclusions by declaring that we believe in the cast, but that if it be not more authentic than the book, we agree with the phrenologists.

Warden's book consists of letters, addressed to the lady he afterwards married, vamped up by "a literary gentleman." It bears, in passages, too obvious marks of the handiwork of the literary gentleman, who puts into Warden's mouth meditations of deplorable bathos. But in any case the book is of little value, for a simple reason: Napoleon knew no English, Warden knew no French; and their interpreter was Las Cases. But we cannot help wondering who translated two of Warden's tactful remarks to Napoleon. The latter had asked which was the more popular in England, the army or the navy. Warden replies in the noblest style, and ends, "Such a field as that of Waterloo can hardly find adequate gratitude in the hearts of Englishmen!" To this Napoleon made no reply. On another occasion, Warden addressed the Emperor as follows: "The people of England appear to feel an interest in knowing your sentiments respecting the military character of the Duke of Wellington. They have no doubt that you would be just; and perhaps they may indulge the expectation that your justice might produce a eulogium of which the Duke of Wellington may be proud."

Digitized by Google

Again Napoleon did not answer. But we incline to hope and believe that the strain of translating these two observations was not placed on any interpreter, but that they proceed from the fertile resources of the "literary gentleman," who was not, however, equal to inventing the reply.

If any one, however, should be inclined to give credit to this narrative, he should examine the letter of Sir Thomas Reade (head of Lowe's staff at St. Helena), which sets down three-fourths of the book as untrue. Reade adds, we think correctly, that on certain specified points, such as the death of Captain Wright, and the execution of the Duc d'Enghien, Las Cases was ordered to make explanations to Warden which could be published in Europe.

Napoleon's reply to Warden was published in a little book called *Letters from the Cape*. These letters are addressed to a Lady C., who was, no doubt, Lady Clavering, a Frenchwoman who had married an English baronet, and who was a devoted adherent of the Emperor's, as well as a very intimate friend of Las Cases. They were addressed to her, and dated from the Cape, in order to make the world believe that Las Cases, then at the Cape, had written them. The importance of this book arises from the fact that it is considered by the official editors of Napoleon's correspondence to be his composition, and they print it among his works. This is high authority, and is supported by the fact that a first proof of these letters is in existence, with numerous corrections and additions in Napoleon's autograph. But, apart from these proofs, it is abundantly clear, on the testimony both of Gourgaud and of Montholon, that the Emperor dictated these letters himself.

Digitized by Google

Who translated them into English, however, does not appear. If they were translated on the island, it was probably by Mme. Bertrand, for O'Meara does not seem to have been in the secret of them. "The Emperor," says Gourgaud, "tells me that he does not intend to reply to Warden, but that Las Cases, now at the Cape, will reply." Gourgaud bluntly answers that he himself has seen more than ten letters dictated by Napoleon to Bertrand for publication. One, indeed, is on the table at the moment. The Emperor no longer denies the authorship, and Gourgaud is taken into his confidence with regard to their composition. The letters are given to him for correction and annotation. On August 16, 1817, he reads his observations on them to Napoleon, and many of them are adopted. On August 22d Montholon and Gourgaud both record that Napoleon finished the evening by having read to him the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth letters in reply to Warden. Gourgaud also mentions that he is the reader, while Montholon notes that the Emperor bids Gourgaud embody them in a book. Gourgaud, for once courtier-like, or, at any rate, prudent, replies that this would be the work of a copyist, as there is so little to correct. The exiles do not admire them. The Montholons think that the Emperor in these letters puts ridiculous speeches into their mouths, and Mme. Montholon goes so far as to say that they are badly written, full of *sottises* and personalities. She is vexed that the name of her husband should be cited in them. It is all dirt, she says, and the more you stir it up the worse it will smell; and she believes that this pamphlet will occasion much hostile criticism. It is, indeed, only a pamphlet for contempo-

Digitized by Google

rary consumption, with statements in it intended to influence public opinion. It has no value except from its authorship and the statement made in it of the fabricated letter of the Duc d'Enghien, the existence of which the pamphlet explicitly asserts.

O'Meara's *Voice from St. Helena* is perhaps the most popular of all the Longwood narratives, and few publications ever excited so great a sensation as that produced by this worthless book. For worthless it undoubtedly is, in spite of its spirited flow and the vivid interest of the dialogue. No one can read the volumes of Forsyth, in which are printed the letters of O'Meara to Lowe, or the handy and readable treatise in which Mr. Seaton distils the essence of those volumes, and retain any confidence in O'Meara's facts. He may sometimes report conversations correctly, or he may not, but in any doubtful case it is impossible to accept his evidence. He was the confidential servant of Napoleon; unknown to Napoleon, he was the confidential agent of Lowe; and behind both their backs he was the confidential informant of the British government, for whom he wrote letters to be circulated to the cabinet. Testimony from such a source is obviously tainted.

The book of Santini is a pure fabrication. It was written by Colonel Maceroni, an Anglo-Italian follower of Murat's, who has left some readable memoirs. Santini, who had indeed little time for composition, being Napoleon's tailor, hair-cutter, and game-keeper, has, however, his episode in the history of the captivity. As he was waiting at dinner one night Napoleon burst forth at him: "What, brigand, you wished to kill the governor! you villain! If you have any such notions again, you will

Digitized by Google

have to deal with me." And then the Emperor explains to his guests that Santini, who had been of late on long solitary excursions with a double-barrelled gun, had admitted to another Corsican that he intended one barrel for the governor, and the other for himself. It seemed quite natural to Santini. He wished to rid the world of a monster. "It needed all my imperial, all my pontifical authority," said Napoleon, "to restrain him." Santini was deported from the island by Sir Hudson Lowe, and is said to have learned by heart Napoleon's great protest to the powers, and so first brought it to Europe. Maceroni declares that this Corsican factotum was seized on Dutch territory by a force of Prussian cavalry and never seen again. This is, of course, a pure fiction. Santini was harassed enough without so awesome a fate. He was hunted and spied until he was allowed to live under surveillance. He finally returned to Paris, and ended his life, not unsuitably, as custodian of his master's tomb at the Invalides.

The value of Lady Malcolm's book consists, as has been said already, in the vivid reports of Napoleon's conversation, which bear the impress of having been dictated, so to speak, red-hot, by the admiral, and in the picture it gives us of Lowe. Malcolm pleased the Emperor, though on one stormy occasion he did not escape being called a fool (*l'amiral qui est un sot*), and Lady Malcolm was supposed, in her turn, to be fascinated. Napoleon would talk to Malcolm three or four hours at a time; never, for reasons of etiquette, seated, or allowing a seat; both men standing or walking about, till at last they would lean against the furniture from fatigue. The raciness of Napoleon's conversation, even in a translation, is notable.

Digitized by Google

"I made Ossian the fashion," he exclaims. "The income-tax is a good tax, for every one grumbles at it, which shows that every one pays it." "Trifles are great things in France, reason nothing." He tells the story of the Dey of Algiers, who, on hearing that the French were fitting out an expedition to destroy the town, said that, if the king would send him half the money that the expedition would cost, he would burn down the town himself. It is scarcely necessary to say that Lowe disliked these visits for many reasons. He had quarrelled with Napoleon, therefore every one should quarrel with him. He could not see Napoleon, therefore no one should see him. It was now abundantly clear that the one supreme distinction at St. Helena was to obtain an interview with Napoleon; it was also clear that this annoyed the ruler of St. Helena, with whom no one endured an interview who could possibly avoid it. Moreover, who could tell what terrible things might not be said in conversation? Plans of escape might be concerted, messages might be transmitted, and, sin of sins, the governor might be criticised. So the person who had seen Napoleon was expected to hurry to the governor to report what had passed, with the certain reward of being suspected of having suppressed something material. An English lieutenant was sent away from the island because he delayed for a few days to report to the governor a commonplace remark made by the Bertrands, who had met him in a walk. Even the admiral could not be trusted. He soon ceased to be on speaking terms with the governor, but sedulously reported by letter his conversations with Napoleon. Sir Hudson's reply to the last report charged the admiral with sup-

Digitized by Google

pressing matters of consequence, and "the admiral now discovered that there was a system of spies on the island, and that every trifle was reported to the governor. With open, candid Englishmen," continues the ingenuous Lady Malcolm, "this is detestable, and must cause incalculable evil." An exchange of letters ensued between the two high dignitaries, of so inflammable a character that its destruction was suggested. A previous correspondence has, however, been preserved, eminently characteristic of Lowe, whose share in it is tart, narrow, and suspicious. No one who reads it can fail to understand why he was an unfit representative of Britain in so delicate and difficult a charge.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

GOURGAUD

BUT the one capital and supreme record of life at St. Helena is the private journal of Gourgaud, written, in the main at least, for his own eye and conscience alone, without flattery or even prejudice, almost brutal in its raw realism. He alone of all the chroniclers strove to be accurate, and, on the whole, succeeded. For no man would willingly draw such a portrait of himself as Gourgaud has page by page delineated. He takes, indeed, the greatest pains to prove that no more captious, cantankerous, sullen, and impossible a being than himself has ever existed. He watched his master like a jealous woman: as Napoleon himself remarked, "He loved me as a lover loves his mistress; he was impossible." Did Napoleon call Bertrand an excellent engineer, or Las Cases a devoted friend, or Montholon by the endearing expression of son, Gourgaud went off into a dumb, glowering, self-torturing rage, which he fuses into his journal; and yet, by a strange hazard, writing sometimes with almost insane fury about his master, produces the most pleasing portrait of Napoleon that exists. The fact is, he was utterly out of place. On active service, on the field of battle, he would have been of the utmost service to his chief: a keen, intelligent, devoted aide-de-camp. But in the

Digitized by Google

inaction of St. Helena his energy, deprived of its natural outlet, turned on himself, on his nerves, on his relations to others. The result is that he was never happy except when quarrelling or grumbling. Napoleon himself was in much the same position. His fire without fuel, to use Mme. de Montholon's figure, consumed himself and those around him. But Napoleon had the command of what luxury and companionship there was: the others of the little colony had their wives and children. Gourgaud had nothing.

Napoleon seems to have been aware that Gourgaud was not the man for the place. He had originally selected Planat, a man of simple and devoted character, to accompany him. Maitland had noticed on the *Bellerophon* the tears stealing down Planat's cheeks as he sat at breakfast the first day and contemplated his fallen master, and had formed a high opinion of him. Planat, indeed, at the moment of Napoleon's death, was preparing, with unshaken fidelity, to proceed to St. Helena to take the place of Montholon. But on his first nomination being communicated to Gourgaud, there was such a scene of jealous fury that Gourgaud's name had to be substituted. Gourgaud's wishes had thus been gratified; he was almost alone with the Emperor, his only resource was the Emperor, yet every day his sulkiness and susceptibility alienated the Emperor from him. We perceive in his own record constant hints from Napoleon that he had better go, which become broader and broader as time goes on. At last he departed, having first challenged Montholon. The Emperor intervened, and enveloped Montholon in his authority. Whether the duel was a comedy or

Digitized by Google

not, it is impossible to say. The editors of his journal think that it was. Their case rests entirely on a document which they print in their preface from the original among Gourgaud's papers, a letter written by Montholon to Gourgaud a fortnight after the challenge, which shows that their relations were then not unfriendly, and that the departure of Gourgaud was either planned or utilized by the Emperor for purposes of his own. "The Emperor thinks, my dear Gourgaud," writes Montholon, "that you are overacting your part. He fears that Sir H. Lowe may begin to open his eyes." We admit that if this letter were printed by Las Cases we should be inclined to doubt it; as it is, we have no ground for questioning its authenticity. But how much of Gourgaud's departure was dramatic and strategical, and how much due to profound weariness and vexation of spirit, we cannot know: it was probably a compound. It is, however, noteworthy that two months before the ostentatious rupture Montholon records that the Emperor is determined to send Gourgaud away in order to appeal to the Russian Emperor. And, according to Montholon, as will appear later, Gourgaud's departure is merely a Russian mission. There is no mention or question of a quarrel. This, however, is an omission probably due to the editing of 1847. In fine, we believe the truth to be this: Gourgaud was weary of the life at St. Helena; Napoleon was weary of Gourgaud; so that Gourgaud's real and active jealousy of Montholon was utilized by the Emperor as a means both of getting rid of Gourgaud and of communicating with Europe through an officer who could thoroughly explain the situation and policy of Longwood.

Digitized by Google

The value of Gourgaud's journal does not lie in the portrayal of himself, but of his master. Incidentally, however, it is necessary to say much of Gourgaud as the foil who illustrates a new view of his chief's character. Without this inducement we should soon have had enough of the brilliant young officer, devoted to his master, with the unreasonable, petulant jealousy which made his devotion intolerable, but, above all, profoundly bored. Bored with the island, bored with the confinement, bored with the isolation, bored with celibacy, bored with court life in a shanty involving all the burden without any of the splendor of a palace, bored with inaction, bored with himself for being bored. And so he is forced to sharpen his rusting energies with quarrels, sulky rage with the Emperor, fitful furies with Las Cases, and, when Las Cases is deported, animosity against Montholon, apparently because there is no one else to quarrel with; for Bertrand is a laborious and futile peacemaker. The long moan of his life is Ennui. Ennui, Grand Ennui, Melancholie, are his perpetual entries. Here is a week's sample record: "Mardi 25, Ennui, Ennui! Mercredi 26, idem. Jeudi 27, idem. Vendredi 28, idem. Samedi 29, idem. Dimanche 30, Grand Ennui." Again, "j'étouffe d'Ennui." We fear, indeed, that, so far as Gourgaud is concerned, the compendious word Ennui would make an adequate substitute for the 1200 octavo pages of his journal. Fortunately it is not Gourgaud who is in question.

Let us confess that the more we see of him the better we like him. He first became familiar to us in warfare with Sir Walter Scott. Scott hinted that Gourgaud had acted a double part, and had been a

Digitized by Google

sort of agent for the British government. Thereupon Gourgaud, not unnaturally, wished to fight Scott, and, denied the relief of pistols, betook himself to pamphlets. But to be a foe of Scott is to be the foe of Great Britain; and Gourgaud passed among us as a sort of swashbuckler of dubious reputation. As to Scott's charges we say nothing, because we know nothing, nor were they adequately dealt with by Gourgaud. All that he says which is pertinent to Scott's charges is that never once while at Longwood did he speak to Sir H. Lowe, and that he defies any one to show a single line in his handwriting which is not instinct with the devotion he felt for Napoleon. In making this challenge he must have been conscious that his own diary was in his own keeping, for it contains innumerable passages which would scarcely have stood his test. Moreover, he records in it more than one interview he had with Lowe while he was at Longwood. But where at St. Helena was truth to be found? "Jesting Pilate" might long have waited for any local indication from that island.

It is alleged by Scott that "before leaving St. Helena he was very communicative both to Sir Hudson Lowe and Sturmer, the Austrian commissioner, respecting the secret hopes and plans which were carrying on at Longwood. When he arrived in Britain in the spring of 1818 he was no less frank and open with the British government, informing them of the various proposals for escape which had been laid before Napoleon, the facilities and difficulties which attended them, and the reasons why he preferred remaining on the island to making the attempt." Scott rests these statements on records in the State Paper Office, and on a report by Sturmer,

Digitized by Google

which, with the adhesive disingenuousness of St. Helena, is not included in the French collection of Sturmer's reports, but which may be found, stripped of its date, in the gloomy recesses of Forsyth's appendix. We do not pretend or wish to adjudicate on this matter, but we do not believe that Gourgaud, an honorable and distinguished French general, long attached to the person of Napoleon, would wantonly reveal to Lowe, Bathurst, or Sturmer the real secrets of the Emperor's intimacy. We are rather inclined to believe that, either to obtain the confidence of these gentlemen, or to gratify his own sense of humor, or, most probable of all, to divert their suspicions from something else, he was mystifying them; and, perhaps, as Montholon says, overplaying his part. When we read in Balmain's reports, "His denunciations of his former master are beyond decency," or when he tells Balmain that he intended to shoot Napoleon on the battle-field of Waterloo, and cannot understand why he failed to do so, we seem to hear the warning voice of Montholon, "You are overacting your part." His candor was at least suspicious; *ton de franchise suspect*, says the Russian government in its memorial. We do not believe, for example, that it had been proposed to remove Napoleon in a trunk of dirty linen, or a beer-cask, or a sugar-box, or as a servant carrying a dish. Yet these, we are informed, were the revelations of Gourgaud. Across an abyss of eighty years we seem to see him wink. So, too, as to the £10,000 which Napoleon is said to have received in Spanish doubloons. Such a parcel would be bulky and weighty; the expenditure of such a coin would soon be traced: we know exactly the money left by Na-

Digitized by Google

poleon on his death, and there are no doubloons: they were, we are convinced, coined by Gourgaud for the consumption of Lowe.

We think it very possible that the irritable officer did at St. Helena talk something at random, as Balmain says, in the madness of his jealous rage, and that, as Montholon says, he overdid his part. But we are convinced that he revealed nothing of the slightest importance either now or afterwards in London. Indeed, he was soon ordered out of England on account of his active devotion to the cause of his master.

It must, however, be admitted that on one occasion at St. Helena he used language which, to say the least, is ambiguous. We give it as recorded by himself. He is speaking to Montchenu, the old French Royalist commissioner. "You are talking," says Gourgaud, "to a chevalier of St. Louis; whatever attachment I might still have felt (in 1814) for the Emperor, nothing could have made me fail in my duty to the King and my gratitude to the Duc de Berry. The proof of this is that my friend Lallemand thought me too much attached to this last prince to put me in the secret of his conspiracy. After the departure of the King and the dismissal of his household, I gave in my adhesion to the chief of the French nation. I should always have remained faithful to the King had he remained with the army, but I thought that he abandoned us. On April 3d I was appointed by the Emperor his first orderly officer, and that is why I am here." Men who use language of this kind cannot complain if they are misunderstood, or if they are held to be playing an ambiguous part.

Gourgaud was, it should be remembered, esteemed

Digitized by Google

by all who knew him, and did not have to live with him. But the curse of his temper was jealousy, which made him an impossible companion. It empoisoned his life at St. Helena. Long after his departure from St. Helena the success of Ségur's narrative of the Russian campaign maddened him, and drove him to publishing a waspish, unworthy criticism of it in a thick volume, which has by no means attained the enduring fame of the history which it professes to review. By others whom his jealousies did not touch he was highly esteemed. Lowe, for example, always considered and described him as a gallant and loyal soldier who followed his Emperor in adversity, without mixing himself up in vexations and complaints. Jackson says the same thing. "He is a brave and distinguished officer," says Sturmer, "but no courtier"; and this description sums him up exactly. He was so little of a courtier that the proceedings of courtiers irritate him. When Las Cases exclaims, on hearing some military narrative of Napoleon's, that it is finer than the *Iliad*, Gourgaud, like Burchell in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, says, audibly, "Fudge," or its equivalent. The narrative had been dictated to and put in form by Las Cases; so Gourgaud grimly remarks, "I can see Achilles well enough, but not Las Cases as Homer." He is so repelled by this sort of thing that Napoleon ceases to confide his compositions to him, and keeps them for the less formidable criticisms of Las Cases. He had seen the brilliant side of court life at the Tuileries when he had other things to think of than the relative favor of courtiers; now he sees nothing but the seamy side, and has nothing to think of but the confidence shown to others and the coldness to

Digitized by Google

himself. He becomes more and more sullen, and, consequently, a less and less agreeable companion. Take, for example, this: Napoleon asks what time it is. "Ten o'clock, sire." "Ah! how long the nights are!" "And the days, sire?" At last Napoleon says frankly to him: "What right have you to complain that I only see and dine with Montholon? You are always gloomy, and do nothing but grumble. Be as gloomy as you please, so long as you do not appear gloomy in my presence." And, though we cannot blame Gourgaud for being melancholy, we think Napoleon was right. In a society of four men, one of whom, at any rate, might well be held to require the anxious treatment of a convalescent after a terrible fall, there should have been a sustained effort in the common interest to combat depression. Gourgaud made no such effort; he was the embodiment of captious melancholy, yet he could not understand why his bilious companionship was not eagerly sought. But to the blank hopelessness of St. Helena a Knight of Sorrowful Countenance was an intolerable addition. And, indeed, on more than one occasion Gourgaud embarrassed his master by weeping in conversation. *Je pleure* is not an unfrequent entry.

Moreover, Gourgaud was not merely passively gloomy; he became actively a bore. He began on every slight occasion to detail his services and his claims, as a preface or an epilogue to a long recital of his wrongs. Bertrand suffered much of this with exemplary patience; for Gourgaud's conception of conversation with Bertrand is embodied in this entry: "He talks of his worries, and I of mine." But at last he told Gourgaud that no longer, even on this

Digitized by Google

mutual principle, could he be wearied with Gourgaud's complaints. One of Gourgaud's great achievements was the having saved Napoleon's life at the battle of Brienne. He was supposed, by Warden at any rate, to have had his sword engraved with an account of this exploit. This was all very well; but Napoleon heard too much of it, and so the following scene occurred: *Gourgaud*—"I never had engraved on my sword that I had saved your life, and yet I killed a hussar that was attacking Your Majesty." *Napoleon*—"I do not recollect it." *Gourgaud*—"This is too much!" and so poor Gourgaud storms. At last the Emperor puts a stop to this outburst of spleen by saying that Gourgaud is a brave young man, but that it is astonishing that with such good sense he should be such a baby. And Gourgaud had good sense. With regard to the disputes with Sir Hudson, his good sense is nothing less than portentous. With regard to one letter of complaint, he declares boldly that "the less one writes about eating and drinking the better, as these sordid details lend themselves to ridicule." Again, speaking of the Emperor, he says: "He is working at a reply to Lord Bathurst, but one cannot make a noble rejoinder out of the question of eatables." He protests against the waste of the servants at Longwood, and makes the remark, full of the truest sense and dignity: "In our position the best course is to accept the least."

On the whole position he writes with wisdom, and a conviction of what was the proper attitude of Napoleon. "The only law that the Emperor can follow, in my opinion, is neither to insult nor be friends with Hudson Lowe. It would be unworthy of His Majesty to be on cordial terms with that person.

Digitized by Google

The Emperor's position is so frightful that the only method of maintaining his dignity is to appear resigned, and to do nothing to obtain any change in the restrictions. We must endure everything with resignation. If His Majesty had all the island to himself, it would be nothing compared to what he has lost." Would that Napoleon had followed this counsel.

The household at Longwood was not, and could not be, a happy family; but it might have been much happier than it was. It could not be happy, in the first place, of course, because of the prodigious vicissitude. But, secondly, a collection of Parisians could not be cheerful, perched like crippled sea-birds on a tropical rock. St. Helena had been chosen because it was one of the remotest of islands; for that reason it was antipathetic to the whole lives and nature, and to every taste, of these brilliant people. There was no space, no society, no amusement. There was a meagre shop, but even there they were refused credit by order of the governor. All things considered, they bore this fate, so irksome to any one, so terrible to them, with fortitude and philosophy.

The jealousies which haunt a court forbade them to be a little less unhappy than they were. For them, at this petty court, where neither fortune nor places could be awarded, there was only one dignity, only one consolation—the notice of the Emperor, which alone gave rank and consideration. Hence anger, envy, and tears. Bertrand had soon remarked them: "His Majesty," he said, in April, 1816, "is the victim of intriguers. Longwood is made detestable by their disputes." As a rule, Bertrand comforts himself by declaring that the Emperor is just

Digitized by Google

at bottom, and that though intriguers sometimes get the upper hand for a moment, he always in the long run returns to sound judgment. But jealousy began with the very first night on the island. In Napoleon's limited lodging he had room for only one companion. and he chose Las Cases—Las Cases, a mere acquaintance, as it were, of the eleventh hour. Las Cases at once became the enemy of the human race, so far as his colleagues were concerned. And so they hated him till he was removed, when they all fell on his neck and forgave him.

Then Montholon and Gourgaud fell out, till Gourgaud departed. Then, when two out of the four had gone, the other two seem to have remained in peace of some kind, but we may gather that the preference shown to Montholon was the source of some soreness to Bertrand.

Another subject of discussion was money. They speculated about the Emperor's supposed hoards with the subtle suspicion of heirs in a miser's sick-room. He has given so much to one; it is untrue; he gives another a double allowance; he does not; how does another pay for dress or luxury? They torment themselves and each other with questions like these. The Emperor, with all the malice of a testator, encourages these surmises. I have no one, he says, to leave my money to, but my companions. And this question of money has much to do with Gourgaud's furious jealousies. He is always mounting on a pinnacle whence he declares that he will take nothing from the Emperor; but he is always descending and accepting it. Through a whole volume there run the narrative and variations of his mother's pension. Gourgaud will not ask for one; he does ask

Digitized by Google

for one; he will not take it; he will take it; and so forth, until the reader is left wondering whether Gourgaud's mother, through all these susceptibilities and delicacies, constantly aroused and constantly overcome, ever secured anything at all. In any case, she and her pension became a nightmare to Napoleon, who was irritated by so much filial solicitude for the mother whom his follower had left behind in France. Gourgaud did, indeed, air this devotion a little too often, and this irritated the Emperor. In the first place, Napoleon suspected, we think, and perhaps not unjustly, that the frequent mention of the mother and of her needy circumstances was meant as an appeal for his assistance, which he was willing to give, but not under pressure; so he gave it at last, irritably and ungraciously. Secondly, this good son caused some inconvenience by painting rose-color everything at St. Helena in order to cheer his parent. His letters of this deceptive character were read by Lowe, or by Bathurst, or both, and gave them the most sensible pleasure, as affording an authoritative contradiction to Napoleon's complaints. Bathurst and Lowe henceforward cherished a sort of affection for Gourgaud. This fact, and these dutifully mendacious letters, could not be agreeable to Napoleon. Thirdly, the Emperor could not bear that any one who was devoted to him should be devoted to any one else. He required a sole and absorbing allegiance. Bertrand's wife and Gourgaud's mother offended him. "You are mad to love your mother so," said Napoleon to Gourgaud. "How old is she?" "Sixty-seven, sire." "Well, you will never see her again; she will be dead before you return to France." Gourgaud weeps.

Digitized by Google

But Napoleon's brutality was only a passing expression of annoyance at a devotion which he considered he should absorb. Napoleon made no secret of this; he avowed it to Montholon. "Every one," he says, "has a dominant object of affection, and to those whom I like and honor with my confidence, I must be that object; I will share with nobody." On other occasions he was even more cynical: "Princes," he said, "only like those who are useful to them, and so long as they are useful." Again, he says to Gourgaud: "After all, I only care for people who are useful to me, and so long as they are useful." His followers were well aware of this principle in Napoleon. Bertrand in a moment of irritation confides to Gourgaud the astonishing discovery that for some time past he has been aware that the Emperor is an egotist. "He only," says Bertrand, "cares for those from whom he expects some service." Another day he goes further. "The Emperor is what he is, my dear Gourgaud; we cannot change his character. It is because of that character that he has no friends, that he has so many enemies, and, indeed, that we are at St. Helena. And it is for the same reason that neither Drouot nor the others who were at Elba, except ourselves (Mme. Bertrand and himself), would follow him here." Bertrand was no doubt right in saying that Napoleon had no friends, for the friends of his youth were dead; and, in the days of his power, he had denied himself that solace and strength. "I have made courtiers; I have never pretended to make friends," he would say. His imperial ideas of state and aloofness, indeed, made any idea of friendship impossible. Now the retribution had come; when he wanted friends, he found only

Digitized by Google

courtiers. Painfully and laboriously he endeavored to resume the forgotten art of making friends. It was only fair, and in the nature of things, that he should be but partially successful.

It is not a pleasant trait in Napoleon that he should expect the blind renunciation of every human tie and human interest that a Messiah alone may exact; that he should desire his followers to leave all and follow him. But much excuse must be made for an egotism which was the inevitable result of the prolonged adulation of the world.

And although Gourgaud had much to bear—chiefly from the torture he inflicted on himself—we gather from his own account that the balance is largely in his favor, and that he made his companions suffer much more. Of all these, Napoleon, if he may be called a companion, had by far the most to endure.

For, as we have said, the real value of Gourgaud's book does not lie in the portraiture, interesting though it be, of himself. What is profoundly interesting is the new and original view that it afforded of Napoleon's own character, and the faithful notes of Napoleon's conversation in its naked strength. We dwell on Gourgaud, not for the sake of Gourgaud, but for the sake of Napoleon. Napoleon is the figure; Gourgaud is the foil.

We all are apt to fancy that we thoroughly understand Napoleon's disposition: selfish, domineering, violent, and so forth. But in this book we see a new Napoleon, strange, and contrary to our ideas: a Napoleon such as few but Rapp have hitherto presented to us. Rapp, indeed, the most independent and unflattering of all Napoleon's generals, and who, as his

Digitized by Google

aide-de-camp, was constantly by his side, says of his master: "Many people describe Napoleon as a harsh, violent, passionate man. It is because they never knew him. Absorbed as he was in affairs, opposed in his plans, hampered in his projects, his humor was sometimes impatient and fluctuating. But he was so good and so generous that he was soon appeased, though the confidants of his cares, far from appeasing, would endeavor to excite his anger." The austere and upright Drouot constantly averred when at Elba that the Emperor's anger was only skin-deep. "I always found him," says his private secretary, "kind, patient, indulgent." Testimonies of this kind might be multiplied from more dubious sources. But Gourgaud was certainly one of the confidants described by Rapp. He unconsciously depicts himself as petulant, sulky, and captious to the last degree; while we see Napoleon gentle, patient, good-tempered, trying to soothe his touchy and morbid attendant with something like the tenderness of a parent for a wayward child. Once, indeed, he calls Gourgaud a child. Gourgaud is furious. "Me a child! I shall soon be thirty-four. I have eighteen years of service; I have been in thirteen campaigns; I have received three wounds! And then to be treated like this! Calling me a child is calling me a fool." All this he pours forth on the Emperor in an angry torrent.

The Napoleon of our preconceptions would have ordered a subordinate who talked to him like this out of the room before he had finished a sentence. What does this Napoleon do? Let us hear Gourgaud himself. "In short, I am very angry. The Emperor seeks to calm me; I remain silent; we pass to the

Digitized by Google

drawing-room. His Majesty wishes to play chess, but places the pieces all awry. He speaks to me gently: 'I know you have commanded troops and batteries, but you are, after all, very young.' I only reply by a gloomy silence." The insulting charge of youth is more than Gourgaud can bear. This is our Gourgaud as we come to know him. But is this the Napoleon that we have learned? Not menacing or crushing his sullen and rebellious equerry, but trying to soothe, to assuage, to persuade.

There was no one at St. Helena who had more to endure and more to try him than the Emperor, no one whose life had been less trained to patience and forbearance; but we rise from the study of Gourgaud's volumes with the conviction that few men would have borne so patiently with so irritating an attendant. Sometimes he is so moved as to speak openly of the disparity of their burdens. Gourgaud speaks of his "chagrin." The Emperor turns upon him, with pathetic truth: "You speak of sorrow, you! And I! What sorrows have I not had! What things to reproach myself with! You, at any rate, have nothing to regret." And again: "Do you suppose that when I wake at night I have not bad moments—when I think of what I was, and what I am?"

On another occasion Napoleon proposes a remedy, or a sedative, for Gourgaud's ill-humor—unique, perhaps, among moral or intellectual prescriptions. He suggests that the general shall set himself to translate the *Annual Register* into French: "You should translate the *Annual Register;* it would give you an immense reputation." To which the hapless Gourgaud replies: "Sire, this journal has no doubt

Digitized by Google

merits, but," and so deprecates the glorious task. This seems to us one of the few humorous incidents in the annals of the captivity. Sometimes the Emperor builds castles in the air to cheer his sulky follower. In England, "where we shall be in a year," he will find a bride in the city for Gourgaud with a fortune of, say, £30,000; he will visit the happy couple and enjoy fox-hunting. For the meditations of the Emperor constantly turn to a suitable marriage for Gourgaud—sometimes English, sometimes French, sometimes Corsican, but always with an adequate dowry.

The revelation of this book is, we repeat, the forbearance and long-suffering of Napoleon. The instances of Gourgaud's petulance and insolence are innumerable. One day the Emperor orders him to copy a letter on the subject of his grievances, which was to be launched above the signature of Montholon. "I am not the copyist of M. de Montholon," replies Gourgaud. The Emperor truly says that he is wanting in respect, and he has the grace to acknowledge that he is uneasy all night. Then, when Las Cases goes, the Emperor writes him a letter too warm for Gourgaud's taste. Irritated by Gourgaud's criticism and sulks, Napoleon signs it *votre dévoué*. Then Gourgaud breaks out. The Emperor invites him to play chess, and asks why he is so out of temper. "Sire, I have one great fault; I am too much attached to Your Majesty; I am not jealous, but I feel bound to say that this letter is not worthy of you. Good God! I see that my poor father was too honest a man. He brought me up in much too strict principles of honor and virtue. I know now that one should never tell the truth to sovereigns,

Digitized by Google

and that flatterers and schemers are those who succeed with them. Your Majesty will come to understand some day what a hypocrite is this man." Napoleon replies, half wearily, half pathetically, "What do you mean—that he betrays me? After all, Berthier, Marmont, and the rest on whom I have heaped benefits, have all done it. Mankind must be very bad to be as bad as I consider it."

This scene rankles, and leaves Gourgaud for a long time in so diabolical a mood that the Emperor is forced from mere weariness of these outbursts of temper to confine himself to his room. When Gourgaud hears this, he immediately, by way of allaying the strain on their common life, challenges Montholon. Things get worse and worse, until Gourgaud remonstrates with the Emperor on the double allowance that he gives Montholon. Napoleon points out that Montholon has a wife and family, which Gourgaud has not. Still Gourgaud grumbles. At last Napoleon loses patience, and says frankly that he prefers Montholon to Gourgaud. Then, indeed, there is an explosion. Gourgaud is choked with tears, says that all the generals who have distinguished him must have been mistaken, and so forth. Not at all, replies the Emperor; they saw you on the field of battle, brave and active—they did not, he implies, see you as you are now. All that the reader can gather from Gourgaud's own record is that it is scarcely possible that Montholon should have been so disagreeable as not to be a preferable companion to Gourgaud. And so the incessant and wearisome scenes go on—the Emperor patient and friendly; the aide-de-camp fretful, sullen, even insulting. One day, for example, he says: "Yes, sire, provided that

Digitized by Google

history does not say that France was very great before Napoleon, but partitioned after him." Even this taunt does not ruffle his master. Another time, after a tiresome wrangle, the Emperor tells him good-humoredly to go to bed and calm himself. To which Gourgaud replies that if he had not more philosophy and strength of mind than Napoleon he would not be able to get through the night. A few weeks after this remarkable statement our diarist shows his philosophy and strength of mind by informing Bertrand that his patience is at an end, and that he must box Montholon's ears.

On another occasion Napoleon utters a few gloomy words. "I," he said, "though I have long years of life before me, am already dead. What a position!" "Yes, sire," says Gourgaud, with patronizing candor, "it is indeed horrible. It would have been better to die before coming here. But as one is here, one should have the courage to support the situation. It would be so ignominious to die at St. Helena." The Emperor, in reply, merely sends for Bertrand as a more agreeable companion. On yet another day the Emperor groans, "What weariness! What a cross!" Gourgaud is at once ready with his superior compassion. "It pains me—me, Gourgaud—to see the man who commanded Europe brought to this." But on this occasion he keeps his pity for his journal.

This all seems incredible to us, with our preconceived opinion of Napoleon, and as our business is with him, we only make these quotations to show the incessant irritations and annoyances to which he was exposed on the part of his own friends, and the unexpected gentleness and patience with which he bore them.

Digitized by Google

His companions, indeed, were not of very much comfort to him; Bertrand was much absorbed by his wife; Montholon was neither very able nor very trustworthy; Las Cases, who was an adroit and intelligent talker, was a firebrand to the jealousies of the others; Gourgaud was almost intolerable. Napoleon had to make the best of them, to soothe them, to cheer them, to pay visits to Mme. Bertrand, and to make presents to Mme. de Montholon, to try and put Gourgaud to some mathematical and historical work which would occupy his mind. Or else the Emperor tries almost humbly to put Gourgaud into a better humor. Six weeks before the final crisis he comes beside his sulky follower, and, as this last himself admits, exerts himself to make himself agreeable to Gourgaud. He pinches his ear—the well-known sign of his affection and good-humor. "Why are you so sad? What is the matter with you? Pluck up and be gay, Gorgo, Gorgotto; we will set about a book together, my son, Gorgo." "Gorgo, Gorgotto," does not record his reception of these advances. Next day, however, there is the same half-piteous appeal: "Gorgo, Gorgotto, my son."

Sometimes, no doubt, Gourgaud records that the Emperor is, or appears to be, cold or in a bad temper. But this can generally be traced to some absorbing news, or to some behavior or to some allusion of the chronicler himself. Moreover, these occasions are rare, and we gather them only from Gourgaud's malign impressions, not from any proof of the Emperor's anger. Once in these last days there is a misunderstanding, notable only as showing Gourgaud's anxiety to misunderstand. I shall die, says Napoleon, and you will go away: "*vous vous en irez*"

Digitized by Google

(you will go away.) The general thinks he hears "*vous vous en rirez*" (you will laugh at it), and sees a halcyon opportunity for righteous wrath. "Although Your Majesty is habitually harsh to me, this is too much. I trust you do not mean what you are saying." Then there is an explanation, and the ruffled plumes are momentarily smoothed. So proceeds this one-sided, cat-and-dog life. Everything that Napoleon says and does is a grievance. When Las Cases has gone, the Montholons lurk behind everything; they are the root of all evil. Nothing can be more wearisome, more irritating, than this wrong-headed record. So the reader welcomes the inevitable catastrophe. After one of these scenes, in which, on Gourgaud's own showing, he is entirely in the wrong, he begs Bertrand to "organize his departure." But still he delays. Before he goes he must challenge Montholon, and Mme. de Montholon is so near her confinement that he fears to agitate her. Within a week, however, of the request to Bertrand the child is born. That very day Gourgaud declares to Bertrand that the moment has come to challenge Montholon. Nine years has he been with the Emperor (here follows the inevitable record of his services), and he is to be sacrificed to the Montholons. "Ah, marshal, the Emperor has been a great general, but what a hard heart!" Still he waits a week. Then he has an interview with Napoleon, and declares his deadly intentions. "Behold my hair, which I have not cut for months, nor will cut until I am revenged." The Emperor says that he is a brigand, nay, an assassin, if he menaces Montholon, but that Montholon will kill him. So much the better, says Gourgaud; it is better to die with honor

Digitized by Google

than to live with shame. What do you want? asks Napoleon; to take precedence of Montholon, to see me twice a day—what is it? Gourgaud sullenly replies that a brigand and assassin can ask nothing. Then the Emperor apologizes and begs him to forget those expressions. Gourgaud is mollified, consents to refrain from a challenge, if Napoleon gives him a written order to that effect, but, in a confused narrative, explains that he is resolved on leaving St. Helena. The obscurity is probably due to the fact, which we have already discussed, that the motives for his departure were mixed. It was impossible for him to continue on his present footing; he had become irksome to the Emperor, and the Emperor a torture to him; and yet, though leaving on these terms, and for these causes, he was to be an agent for the Emperor in Europe. We discern obscurely through the perplexed paragraphs that it is feared he may be suspected of being sent on a mission; that he must leave on grounds of ill-health, and with certificates of illness from O'Meara. Napoleon bids him farewell. "It is the last time we shall see each other." They are destined, however, to meet again. As Gourgaud does not receive the written order, he calls out Montholon. With his usual unconsciousness of humor, he sends with the challenge a gun and six louis which he had borrowed of his enemy. Montholon replies that he has given his word of honor to his master not to fight under present circumstances. Then Gourgaud doubles back again. The strange creature goes to Lowe, of all people, and asks his advice. Lowe says that some will think that the general is leaving because he is bored, some because he has a mission. Thereupon Gourgaud begs to be

Digitized by Google

treated with extreme rigor, and returns to Longwood to write a letter to Napoleon, asking leave to retire on the ground of illness. The Emperor grants permission, regretting, with imperturbable gravity, that the liver complaint, indigenous to the island (and with which, for obvious reasons, he was always determined to credit himself), should have made another victim. He receives Gourgaud once more. This last records, though, it may be presumed, very incompletely, what passes. The Emperor bids him see Princess Charlotte, on whose favor he reckoned. It may be noted, as a fair example of the difficulties that beset the seeker for truth in St. Helena, that Napoleon, when he is reported as saying this, had known for several days that she was dead. He prophetically sees Gourgaud commanding French artillery against the English. "Tell them in France that I hate those scoundrels, those wretches, as cordially as ever." (This was a gloss on the instructions he had dictated the day before, when he declared: "I have always highly esteemed the English people, and, in spite of the martyrdom imposed on me by their ministers, my esteem for them remains.") He gives the parting guest a friendly tap on the cheek. "Good-bye; we shall see each other in another world—embrace me." Gourgaud embraces him with tears, and so ends this strange, unhappy connection. From another source we discover that the day before this farewell interview, the Emperor dictated to Montholon a long appeal to the Emperor of Russia, probably for the use of Gourgaud. To this document we shall return later. Napoleon also gave definite instructions to Gourgaud as to his course on arriving in Europe. The general was to

Digitized by Google

convey certain notes in the soles of his shoes: he was to take some of the Emperor's hair to Marie Louise. There is nothing striking or particularly confidential in this paper. What was secret was probably oral.

But to return to St. Helena. There was, of course, the inevitable question of money—the usual offer and the usual refusal, the usual vagueness as to the ultimate result. Then Gourgaud goes forth among the Gentiles; stays with Jackson, dines with Lowe and the commissioners, abuses Napoleon, communicates cock-and-bull revelations, overacts his part. Meanwhile, we learn from Montholon that he is all the time secretly communicating to Longwood the result of his conversations with Sturmer and Balmain. After a month of this sort of life he sails away, with the benedictions of his new friends, with letters of introduction from Montchenu, with a substantial loan from Lowe in his pocket, and with secret communications from Napoleon in the soles of his boots. A characteristic ending to his tormented exile.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

THE DEPORTATION

WERE it possible, we would ignore all this literature, as it is peculiarly painful for an Englishman to read. He must regret that his government ever undertook the custody of Napoleon, and he must regret still more that the duty should have been discharged in a spirit so ignoble and through agents so unfortunate. If St. Helena recalls painful memories to the French, much more poignant are those that it excites among ourselves.

In these days we are not perhaps fair judges of the situation, as it presented itself to the British government. They were at the head of a coalition which had twice succeeded in overthrowing Napoleon. It had cost Great Britain, according to the spacious figures of statistical dictionaries, more than eight hundred millions sterling to effect Napoleon's removal to Elba. His return had cost them millions more, besides a hideous shock to the nervous system of nations. What all this had cost in human life can never perhaps be fairly estimated; not less than two millions of lives. The first main object, then, of the allies—a duty to their own people, who had sacrificed so much—was to make it absolutely certain that Napoleon should nevermore escape. Our own view is that under no circumstances could Na-

Digitized by Google

poleon have ever again conquered Europe; his energies were exhausted, and so was France for his lifetime. But the allies could not know this; they would have been censurable had they taken such a view into consideration, and in any case Napoleon, well or ill, active or inactive, if at large, would have been a formidable rallying point for the revolutionary forces of Europe.

We may, then, consider it as admitted and established that Napoleon could never again be a free agent. It was hard for him, but he had been hard on the world. And in a sense it was the greatest compliment that could be paid him.

Napoleon surrendered himself to Great Britain, and the allies desired that Great Britain should be answerable for him. In what spirit did our government accept this charge? "We wish," writes Lord Liverpool, Prime Minister, to Lord Castlereagh, Foreign Secretary, — "We wish that the King of France would hang or shoot Bonaparte, as the best termination of the business." To make his case clear he put it thus to Eldon: Napoleon "must then revert either to his original character of a French subject, or he had no character at all, and headed his expedition as an outlaw and an outcast—*hostis humani generis.*" The option, as it presented itself, apparently, to Lord Liverpool at that time, was that Napoleon might either be handed to Louis XVIII. as a subject to be treated as a rebel, or might be placed outside the pale of humanity and treated as vermin. Again he writes regretfully to Castlereagh that "if . . . the King of France does not feel himself sufficiently strong to treat him as a rebel, we are ready to take upon ourselves the custody of his person."

Digitized by Google

and so forth. Sir Walter Scott admits that in 1816 a considerable party in Britain still considered that Napoleon should have been handed over to Louis XVIII. to be dealt with as a rebel subject. Fortunately, though no thanks to our ministers, we are spared the memory of their having handed over Napoleon to the French government to be shot like Ney.

We see, then, that there was not the slightest hope of our government behaving with any sort of magnanimity in the matter; though a British prince, the Duke of Sussex, in combination with Lord Holland, recorded his public protest against the course which was pursued. Napoleon, who had thought of Themistocles, and afterwards thought of Hannibal, had appealed, with not perhaps so much confidence as he professed, to the hospitality of Great Britain. He had hoped, under the name of Colonel Muiron, an early friend who had been killed by his side, while shielding his body, at Arcola, and for whose memory he had a peculiar tenderness, to live as an English country gentleman. This, we think, though we say so with regret, was impossible. England was too near France for such a solution. The throne of the Bourbons, which had become, for some mysterious reason, a pivot of our policy, could never have been safe, were it generally known that some score of miles from the French coast there was a middle-aged French colonel who had been Napoleon. Not all the precautions that enclosed Danaë could have prevented commiseration and solicitation to so potent a neighbor. Napoleon had been the genius of unrest in Europe; the tradition and association would have remained with Colonel Muiron, however respectable and domesticated that officer

Digitized by Google

might be. And Napoleon, indeed, blurted out the truth at St. Helena in the presence of his little circle. He had just received a letter stating that there was a great change of opinion in France. "Ah!" he exclaims, "were we but in England." Moreover, he would have been the innocent object of all sorts of legal questions, which would have tormented the government. As it was, Admiral Lord Keith was chased round his own fleet through an entire day by a lawyer with a writ, on account of Napoleon.

Lastly, and we suspect that this weighed most with our rulers, he would have become the centre of much sympathy, and even admiration, in England itself. For Great Britain, though victorious, was by no means contented. When we recall her internal history from Waterloo till Napoleon's death, we can well understand that the presence within her United Kingdoms of the triumphant child of the revolution would not have been considered by the Tory ministry as a strength or support to their government. "You know enough," writes Liverpool to Castlereagh, "of the feelings of people in this country not to doubt that he would become an object of curiosity immediately, and possibly of compassion in the course of a few months." The innumerable visitors who flocked to see him at Plymouth confirmed the prescience of our premier. There was indeed an extraordinary glamour about the fallen monarch, of which he himself was quite aware. He said with confidence at St. Helena that had he gone to England he would have conquered the hearts of the English. He fascinated Maitland, who took him to England, as he had fascinated Ussher, who had conducted him to Elba. Maitland caused inquiries to be made, after

Digitized by Google

Napoleon had left the *Bellerophon*, as to the feelings of the crew, and received as the result: "Well, they may abuse that man as much as they please; but if the people of England knew him as well as we do, they would not touch a hair of his head." When he left the *Northumberland*, the crew were much of the same opinion: "He is a fine fellow, who does not deserve his fate." The crew which brought Montchenu held similar views. When he had left the *Undaunted*, which conveyed him to Elba, the boatswain, on behalf of the ship's company, had wished him "long life and prosperity in the island of Elba, and better luck another time." After two short meetings, both Hotham, the admiral, and Senhouse, the flag-captain, felt all their prejudices evaporate. "The admiral and myself," writes Senhouse, "have both discovered that our inveteracy has oozed out like the courage of Acres in *The Rivals*." There was a more sublime peril yet. "Damn the fellow!" said Lord Keith, after seeing him, "if he had obtained an interview with His Royal Highness (the Prince Regent), in half an hour they would have been the best friends in England." Napoleon was ultimately made aware of the danger that was apprehended from his living in England. A traveller had told him that the British government could not suffer him there lest the rioters should place him at their head. Another had told him that he had heard Lords Liverpool and Castlereagh say that their main reason for sending him to St. Helena was their fear of his caballing with the opposition. It is unnecessary to expand. Napoleon in England would have been a danger to the governments both of France and of Britain.

Digitized by Google

On the Continent of Europe he could only have lived in a fortress. In some countries he would have been a volcano; in others he could scarcely have escaped outrage or assassination. In the United States he would have been outside the control of those powers which had the greatest interest in his restraint, and, in a region where a Burr had schemed for empire, a Napoleon would have been at least a centre of disturbance. Indeed, he frankly admitted that had he lived there he would not have confined himself, like Joseph, to building and planting, but would have tried to found a state. Montholon avers that, as things were, the crown of Mexico was offered to Napoleon at St. Helena; but this we take for what it is worth. Under these circumstances, however, it was not unnatural to select St. Helena as a proper residence for Napoleon. The Congress at Vienna, in 1814-15, had had their eye on the island as a possible prison for the sovereign of Elba. It was reputed to be a tropical paradise; it was remote; it possessed, said Lord Liverpool, a very fine residence, which Napoleon might inhabit—as he might, indeed, had not Lord Liverpool sent instructions that he was on no account to do so. The Duke of Wellington, too, thought the climate charming, but then he had not to go there; and he viewed the future of Napoleon with a robust but not altruistic philosophy. There was, moreover, only one anchorage, and that very limited; vessels approaching the island could be descried from an incredible distance, and neutral vessels could be altogether excluded.

The selection, we think, can fairly be justified, though it was a terrible shock to Napoleon and his attendants, who had hoped that at the worst their

Digitized by Google

destination would be Dumbarton Castle or the Tower of London. No good Frenchman appears to be long happy outside France, and St. Helena seemed to be the end of the world. Napoleon himself said at first that he would not go alive. Eventually he recovered himself, and behaved with dignity and composure. From the very first he had much to bear. Savary and Lallemand were forbidden to accompany him, and their parting with him is described by stolid British witnesses as a scene of anguish. They, with others of his suite, were shipped to Malta, and there interned. He himself was handed over to Cockburn, who seems to have entered with relish into the spirit of his instructions. Napoleon was now to be known as General Bonaparte, and treated with the same honors "as a British general not in employ." He was soon made to feel that a British general not in employ was entitled to no peculiar consideration. A cabin twelve feet by nine was assigned to him. When he attempted to use the adjacent room as a private study, he was at once made to understand that it was common to all officers. "He received the communication with submission and good-humor." When he appeared on the deck bare-headed, the British officers remained covered. Why, indeed, should they show courtesy to a half-pay officer? Napoleon, who had never been accustomed to sit at table more than twenty minutes, was wearied with the protracted English meal, and when he had taken his coffee went on deck, "rather uncivilly," thinks the admiral, and desires every one to remain. "I believe the general has never read Lord Chesterfield," he remarks. This delicate irony was not lost on Napoleon's little court, one of whom was quick to retort with pertinence and

Digitized by Google

effect. She might have added that the admiral could not himself have read Lord Chesterfield with any great attention, as the practice of sitting over wine is one that that philosopher especially reprobates. "It is clear," notes the admiral, "he is still inclined to act the sovereign occasionally, but I cannot allow it." Pursuing this course of discipline, he notes, a few days later: "I did not see much of General Buonaparte throughout this day, as, owing to *his appearing inclined to try to assume again improper consequence*, I was purposely more than usually distant with him." A lion-tamer, indeed! We were truly far removed from the days of the Black Prince and another captive sovereign of France.

Even Montchenu, the French commissioner, whose views as to the proper treatment of Napoleon were of the austerest character, thinks that Cockburn behaved somewhat too cavalierly to the captive. He quotes Napoleon as saying: "Let them put me in chains if they like, but let them at least treat me with the consideration that is due to me."

Cockburn, from his vantage-point of native chivalry, considers the "nature" of Napoleon as "not very polished," but that he is as civil as his "nature seems capable of." So that the admiral, on Napoleon's birthday, unbends so far as to drink his health, "which civility he seemed to appreciate." Later again, Sir George states, with a proper appreciation of their relative stations in life, "I am always ready to meet him half-way, when he appears to conduct himself with due modesty and consideration of his present situation." And at last, so decently did he comport himself that he earned from the admiral the tribute that "he has throughout shown far less

Digitized by Google

impatience about the wind and the weather, and made less difficulties, than any of the rest of the party."

And yet he and they had some cause for complaint. They were packed like herrings in a barrel. The *Northumberland,* it was said, had been arrested on her way back from India in order to convey Napoleon; all the water on board, it was alleged, had also been to India, was discolored and tainted, as well as short in quantity. They had the gloomiest prospects to face in the future. A little fretfulness, then, would not have been inexcusable, at any rate on the part of the two French ladies. But they appear to have been fairly patient, and at any rate not to have attracted the particular censure of the fastidious Cockburn.

The admiral himself cannot have been entirely at his ease. His crew were in a state of scarcely suppressed mutiny. They refused to get up anchor at Portsmouth, until a large military force was brought on board to compel them. On the voyage their language and conduct were beyond description; they thought nothing of striking the midshipmen. A guard was placed outside the Emperor's cabin to prevent communication between the captive and the crew. Napoleon is said to have told Cockburn that he did not doubt that he could get many to join him. What between teaching manners to Napoleon and discipline to his crew, Sir George's position can scarcely have been a sinecure.

Napoleon landed at St. Helena exactly three months after his surrender to Maitland. But he remained in charge of the admiral until a new governor should arrive, for the actual governor, Mr. Wilks, be-

Digitized by Google

sides being the servant of the East India Company, was not, it may be presumed, considered equal to the novel and special functions attaching to his office, though Wellington thinks that it would have been better to keep him. So Cockburn continued in office until April, 1816, when he was superseded by the arrival of Sir Hudson Lowe.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

SIR HUDSON LOWE

THERE are few names in history so unfortunate as Lowe's. Had he not been selected for the delicate and invidious post of Governor of St. Helena during Napoleon's residence, he might have passed through and out of life with the same tranquil distinction as other officers of his service and standing. It was his luckless fate, however, to accept a position in which it was difficult to be successful, but impossible for him. He was, we conceive, a narrow, ignorant, irritable man, without a vestige of tact or sympathy. "His manner," says the apologetic Forsyth, "was not prepossessing, even in the judgment of favorable friends." "His eye," said Napoleon, on first seeing him, "is that of a hyena caught in a trap." Lady Granville, who saw him two years after he had left St. Helena, said that he had the countenance of a devil. We are afraid we must add that he was not what we should call, in the best sense, a gentleman. But a government which had wished Napoleon to be hanged or shot was not likely to select any person of large or generous nature to watch over the remainder of his life; nor, indeed, had they sought one, were they likely to secure one for such a post. Lowe, however, was a specially ill choice, for a reason external to himself. He had commanded the Corsican

Digitized by Google

Rangers, a regiment of Napoleon's subjects and fellow-countrymen in arms against France, and, therefore, from that sovereign's point of view, a regiment of rebels and deserters. This made him peculiarly obnoxious to the Corsican Emperor, who was not sparing of taunts on the subject. Nor was it any advantage to him to have been driven from Capri by General Lamarque with, it was alleged, an inferior force. But not in any case, though we believe his intentions were good, and although he had just married a charming wife, whose tact should have guided him, could he ever have been a success.

In saying this we do not rely on our own impressions alone. The verdict of history is almost uniformly unfavorable. We have met with only two writers who give a favorable account of Lowe, besides his official defenders. One is Henry, a military surgeon quartered at St. Helena, a friend and guest of Lowe's, who gives, by the bye, an admirable description of the reception of his regiment by Napoleon. Henry, throughout his two volumes, has a loyal and catholic devotion to all British governors, which does not exclude Lowe. He speaks of Sir Hudson as a much-maligned man, though he admits that his first impressions of the governor's appearance were unfavorable, and alludes to the hastiness of temper, uncourteousness of demeanor, and severity of measures with which Lowe was credited. All these are counterbalanced in the author's mind by the talent which the governor "exerted in unravelling the intricate plotting constantly going on at Longwood, and the firmness in tearing it to pieces, with the unceasing vigilance," and so forth. No one denies the vigilance, but we have no evidence of plots at Longwood

Digitized by Google

more dangerous than the smuggling of letters. The testimony, therefore, does not seem very valuable; but let it stand for what it is worth. The other authority is the anonymous author of a story called *Edward Lascelles*. Here the prejudices of the author are overcome by the hospitality of the governor; and, in both cases, the charm of Lady Lowe seems to have been effectual. These, however, are slender bulwarks. On the other hand, we have Walter Scott, with strong prepossessions in favor of High Toryism and the Liverpool government. "It would require," says Scott, "a strong defence on the part of Sir Hudson Lowe himself . . . to induce us to consider him as the very rare and highly exalted species of character to whom, as we have already stated, this important charge ought to have been intrusted." Even Lowe's own biographer, whose zeal on the governor's behalf cannot be questioned by those who have survived the perusal of his book, is obliged to censure: on one occasion he says truly that one of Lowe's proceedings was uncalled for and indiscreet; on others, a similar opinion is not less manifest. Alison, an ardent supporter of the same political creed, says that Lowe "proved an unhappy selection. His manner was rigid and unaccommodating, and his temper of mind was not such as to soften the distress which the Emperor suffered during his detention." "Sir Hudson Lowe," said the Duke of Wellington, "was a very bad choice; he was a man wanting in education and judgment. He was a stupid man; he knew nothing at all of the world, and, like all men who know nothing of the world, he was suspicious and jealous." This, from Wellington, was remarkable, for he was not a generous enemy, and he thought

Digitized by Google

that Napoleon had nothing to complain of. But, after all, there are certain witnesses of high character, well acquainted with Lowe, who were on the spot, whose testimony seems to us conclusive. We mean Sir Pulteney Malcolm (who was admiral on the station) and the foreign commissioners. Malcolm was in the same interest, was serving the same government, and seems to have been heartily loyal to the governor. But that did not prevent the governor's quarrelling with him. Malcolm found, as we have seen, that the island was pervaded by the governor's spies, that Lowe did not treat him as a gentleman, that Lowe cross-questioned him about his conversations with Napoleon in a spirit of unworthy suspicion. They parted on the coolest terms, if on any terms at all.

The commissioners were hostile to Napoleon, and anxious to be well with Lowe. But this was impossible. The Frenchman, Montchenu, was the most favorable, yet he writes: "I should not be surprised to hear shortly that his little head has succumbed under the enormous weight of the defence of an inaccessible rock, protected by land and sea forces. . . . Ah! What a man! I am convinced that with every possible search one could not discover the like of him."

Sturmer, the Austrian, says that it would have been impossible to make a worse choice. It would be difficult to find a man more awkward, extravagant, or disagreeable. "I know not by what fatality Sir Hudson Lowe always ends by quarrelling with everybody. Overwhelmed with the weight of his responsibilities, he harasses and worries himself unceasingly, and feels a desire to worry everybody else."

Digitized by Google

Again he writes of Lowe: "He makes himself odious. The English dread him and fly from him, the French laugh at him, the commissioners complain of him, and every one agrees that he is half crazy." Balmain, the Russian, was a favored guest of Lowe's, and ended by marrying his step-daughter. But he never ceases railing against that luckless official. "The governor is not a tyrant, but he is troublesome and unreasonable beyond endurance." Elsewhere he says: "Lowe can get on with nobody, and sees everywhere nothing but treason and traitors." Lowe, indeed, did not love the commissioners, as representing an authority other than his own. He would remain silent when they spoke to him. He was inconceivably rude to them. But that in itself seems no proof of his fitness for his post.

One of his freaks with regard to the commissioners is too quaint to be omitted. He insisted on addressing them in English. Montchenu, who did not understand a word of the language, complained. Whereupon Lowe, who wrote French with facility, offered to correspond in Latin, as the diplomatic language of the sixteenth century.

"The duty of detaining Napoleon's person," said Scott, " . . . required a man of that extraordinary firmness of mind who should never yield for one instant his judgment to his feelings, and should be able at once to detect and reply to all such false arguments as might be used to deter him from the downright and manful discharge of his office. But then, there ought to have been combined with those rare qualities a calmness of temper almost equally rare, and a generosity of mind which, confident in its own honor and integrity, could look with serenity and

Digitized by Google

compassion upon the daily and hourly effects of the maddening causes which tortured into a state of constant and unendurable irritability the extraordinary being subjected to their influence." This rather pompous and wordy definition does certainly not apply to Lowe. He was, in truth, tormented by a sort of monomania of plots and escapes; he was, if we may coin an English equivalent for a useful and untranslatable French word, meticulous almost to madness: he was tactless to a degree almost incredible. We believe that we can produce from the pages of his own ponderous biographer sufficient examples of his character and of his unfitness for a post of discrimination and delicacy.

Montholon offers Montchenu a few beans to plant, both white and green. To the ordinary mind this seems commonplace and utilitarian enough. But the governor's was not an ordinary mind. He scents a plot; he suspects in these innocent vegetables an allusion to the white flag of the Bourbons and the green uniform usually worn by Napoleon. He writes gravely to Bathurst: "Whether the haricots blancs and haricots verts bear any reference to the drapeau blanc of the Bourbons, and the habit vert of General Bonaparte himself, and the livery of his servants at Longwood, I am unable to say; but the Marquis de Montchenu, it appears to me, would have acted with more propriety if he had declined receiving either, or limited himself to a demand for the white alone." "Sir H. Lowe," says Forsyth, "thought the matter of some importance, and again alluded to it in another letter to Lord Bathurst." Even Forsyth cuts a little joke.

Take another example. A young Corsican priest

Digitized by Google

is sent out to the exile. He is, like all the rest, much and necessarily bored—all the more as, it is said, he can neither read nor write. So he determines to try and ride, and he is naturally shy about being seen making the experiment. But he wears a jacket something like Napoleon's, though the rest of the costume is totally unlike the Emperor's. All this is reported in great detail to the governor, and is called by Forsyth, "an apparent attempt to personate Napoleon, and thus deceive the orderly officer. . . . It was not an unimportant fact that Bonaparte did not leave his house that day at all." We do not know the exact stress laid on this incident by Lowe. Judging from Forsyth's account, it was considerable. The fact that the experimental ride of a young priest should be construed into an attempt to personate the middle-aged and corpulent exile shows the effect which an abiding panic may exercise on a mind in which suspicion has become monomania.

Bertrand's children go to breakfast with Montchenu. The little boy, on seeing a portrait of Louis XVII., asks: "*Qui est ce gros pouf?*" On being told, he adds, "*C'est un grand coquin*"; while his sister Hortense displays a not unnatural aversion to the white cockade, the symbol of the party which had ruined her family and condemned her father to death. The artless prattle of these babes is categorically recorded by the conscientious governor for the instruction of the secretary of state.

Balmain records an observation of Lowe's in the same strain of exaggeration, which depicts the man. "Dr. O'Meara," says the governor, "has committed unpardonable faults. He informed the people there" (at Longwood) "of what was going on

Digitized by Google

in the town, in the country, on board the ships; he went in search of news for them, and paid base court to them. Then he gave an Englishman, on behalf of Napoleon, and secretly, a snuff-box! What infamy! And is it not disgraceful of this *grandissime* Emperor thus to break the regulations?" This is not burlesque; it is serious.

The man seems to have become half crazy with his responsibility, and with the sense that he was an object of ridicule both to the French and to his colleagues, while his captive remained the centre of admiration and interest, and, in the main, master of the situation. He prowled uneasily about Longwood, as if unable to keep away, though Napoleon refused to receive him. They had, indeed, only six interviews in all, and those in the first three months of his term of office. For nearly five years before Napoleon's death they never exchanged a word.

With regard to this question of interviews, Napoleon was rational enough. Lowe was antipathetic to him as a man and as his jailer. Consequently, Napoleon lost his temper outrageously when they met, a humiliation for which the Emperor suffered afterwards, and which he was therefore anxious to avoid. Four days before their last terrible conversation of August 18, 1816, Napoleon says, with perfect good sense and right feeling, that he does not wish to see the governor, because when they meet he says things which compromise his character and dignity. On the 18th Lowe comes to Longwood. Napoleon escapes, but Lowe insists on seeing him, and the result fully justifies Napoleon's apprehension and self-distrust. As soon as it is over, Napoleon returns to his former frame of mind, and bitterly regrets

Digitized by Google

having received the governor, for the reasons he gave before, and determines to see him no more—a resolution to which he fortunately adhered.

And yet, with all this mania of suspicion, it is curious to note that Lowe was unable to watch over those of his own household. Balmain is convinced, and brings instances to prove, that all that passed at Government House was promptly known at Longwood.

We have said that Lowe was incredibly tactless. One of his first acts was to ask Napoleon to dinner. We give the actual note as an admirable illustration of Lowe's lack of propriety and common sense: "Should the arrangements of General Bonaparte admit it, Sir Hudson and Lady Lowe would feel gratified in the honor of his company to meet the countess at dinner on Monday next at six o'clock. They request Count Bertrand will have the goodness to make known this invitation to him, and forward to them his reply." Bertrand did make the invitation known to the Emperor, who merely remarked, "It is too silly; send no reply." The "countess" was Lady Loudon, wife of Lord Moira, governor-general of India. A man who could ask one who, the year before, had occupied the throne of France, "to meet the countess" at dinner, was not likely to fulfil, with success, functions of extreme delicacy. Sir Hudson, however, regarded Napoleon as a British general not in employ, and thought it an amiable condescension to invite him to take his dinner with "the countess." Moreover, to make his advances entirely acceptable, the governor addressed Napoleon by a title which he well knew that the Emperor considered as an insult to France and to himself. With a spirit of hospitality, however, unquenched by

Digitized by Google

his rebuff, Sir Hudson, three months afterwards, asked Bertrand to invite the Emperor, on his behalf, to his party on the Prince Regent's birthday, but Bertrand declined to give the message. Lady Lowe, however, had the good sense to say, gayly, "He would not come to my house, and I thought him perfectly right."

It is unnecessary, we think, to multiply these examples, or to dilate further on the uncongenial subject of Lowe's shortcomings and disabilities. Justice, however, requires us to notice that Napoleon was avenged on his enemy by the ill-fortune which pursued Sir Hudson. He was coldly approved by his government, but received little, in spite of constant solicitation. His rewards were, indeed, slender and unsatisfying. George IV., at a levee, shook him warmly by the hand, and he was given the colonelcy of a regiment. Four years later he was made commander of the forces in Ceylon. This was all. Three years afterwards he returned to England in the hope of better things, visiting St. Helena on his way. He found Longwood already converted to the basest uses. The approach to it was through a large pigsty: the billiard-room was a hay-loft: the room in which Napoleon died was converted into a stable. All trace of the garden at which the Emperor had toiled, and which had cheered and occupied his last moments, had vanished: it was now a potato-field. Whatever may have been Lowe's feelings at beholding this scene of desolation and disgrace, he was not destined to witness a more cheering prospect in England. He first waited on his old patron, Lord Bathurst, who advised him at once to return to Ceylon. He then went to the Duke of Wellington and

Digitized by Google

asked for a promise of the reversion of the governorship of Ceylon. The duke replied that he could make no promise till the vacancy arose, but added, ambiguously enough, that no motive of policy would prevent him from employing Sir Hudson wherever that officer's services could be useful. Sir Hudson then pressed for a pension, but the duke replied, unambiguously enough, that neither would Parliament ever grant one nor would Mr. Peel ever consent to propose one to the House of Commons. This was cold comfort from the duke for the man whom the duke professed to think hardly used. And after the expiry of his appointment in Ceylon he never received either employment or pension. We do not know what his deserts may have been, but we think that he was hardly used by his employers.

When O'Meara's book came out, Sir Hudson had his opportunity. He determined to appeal to the law to vindicate his character. He at once retained Copley and Tindal, who bade him select the most libellous passages in the book for his affidavit in applying for a criminal information. This was easier said than done, "from the peculiar art with which the book was composed." . . . "Truth and falsehood," continued Lowe, "were so artfully blended together in the book, that he found it extremely difficult to deny them in an unqualified manner." He found it, indeed, so difficult that he took too long about it. O'Meara had published his book in July, 1822. It was not till the latter end of Hilary term, 1823, that Lowe's counsel appeared in court to move for the criminal information. The judges held that the application was made too late. He had to pay his own costs, and his character remained unvin-

Digitized by Google

dicated. Nor did he attempt any further efforts to clear himself, but, in the words of his admiring biographer, "he wearied the government with applications for redress, when he had, in fact, in his own hands the amplest means of vindicating his own character." These "ample means" apparently lurked in an enormous mass of papers, intrusted first to Sir Harris Nicolas, and then to Mr. Forsyth.

But when at length the vindication appeared, Sir Hudson's ill-fortune did not, in our judgment, forsake him. He himself had been dead nine years when the *Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena*, by Forsyth, was published to clear his sore and neglected memory. It is in three massive volumes, and represents the indigestible digest of Sir Hudson Lowe's papers, extracted by that respectable author whom, in allusion to a former work, Brougham used to address as "My dearest Hortensius." But the result, it must be admitted, is a dull and trackless collection, though it embraces a period which one would have thought made dulness impossible. It is a dreary book, crowned by a barren index. We are willing to believe that the demerits of the work are due rather to the hero than the biographer. With that question we are not concerned. But as a defence of Lowe it is futile, because it is unreadable. Mr. Seaton, however, has, by quarrying in Mr. Forsyth's materials, produced a much more spirited and available refutation of O'Meara.

And, indeed, whatever the demerits of Forsyth's book, it renders two services to the student. For it is a repository of original documents bearing on the story, and it conclusively exposes the bad faith and unveracity of O'Meara.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

THE QUESTION OF TITLE

A DISCUSSION of Lowe's character inevitably raises other questions: the nature of the grievances of which Napoleon complained, and the amount of responsibility for those grievances justly attaching to the governor. The grievances may be ranged under three heads: those relating to title, to finance, and to custody. Of these the question of title is by far the most important, for it was not merely the source of half the troubles of the captivity, but it operated as an almost absolute bar to intercourse, and as an absolute veto on what might have been an amicable discussion of other grievances.

We have set forth at length the ill-advised note in which Lowe asked Napoleon to dinner. It was, in any case, a silly th ng to do, but the governor must have known that there was one phrase in it which would certainly prevent Napoleon's noticing it, for in it he was styled "General Bonaparte." Napoleon regarded this as an affront. When he had first landed on the island Cockburn had sent him an invitation to a ball directed to "General Bonaparte." On receiving it through Bertrand, Napoleon had remarked to the grand marshal: "Send this card to General Bonaparte; the last I heard of him was at the Pyramids and Mount Tabor."

Digitized by Google

But, as a rule, he did not treat this matter so lightly. It was not, he said, that he cared particularly for the title of Emperor, but that when his right to it was challenged, he was bound to maintain it. We cannot ourselves conceive on what ground it was disputed. He had been recogn zed as Emperor by every power in the world except Great Britain, and even she had recognized him as First Consul, and been willing to make peace with him both in Paris and at Châtillon. He had been anointed Emperor by the Pope himself: he had been twice solemnly crowned, once as Emperor, and once as King. He had received every sanction which tradition or religion or diplomacy could give to the imperial title, and as a fact had been the most powerful emperor since Charlemagne. In France the titles he had given, the dukes and marshals and knights whom he had created, all were recognized. The sovereign source of these was by implication necessarily recognized with them. The commissioners appointed to accompany Napoleon to Elba were especially enjoined to give him the title of Emperor and the honors due to that rank. Wellington himself used to send messages to Joseph—the mere transient nominee of Napoleon—as to "the King." It seems impossible, then, to surmise why, except for purposes of petty annoyance, our rulers refused to recognize Napoleon's admission to the caste of kings; for, as Consalvi remarked at Vienna in 1814, "it is not to be supposed that the Pope went to Paris to consecrate and crown a man of straw." But that refusal was the key-note of their policy, vehement and insistent, and it affords an admirable object-lesson of the range and wisdom of that ministry. In the act which passed through Parliament "for

Digitized by Google

more effectually detaining" him "in custody," he is carefully called "Napoleon Buonaparté," as if to deny that he had ever been French at all. This would be pitiable, were it not ridiculous.

Cockburn had on shipboard, as we have seen, resolutely inaugurated this solemn farce. And so soon as he landed he thus answered a note in which Bertrand mentioned the Emperor: "Sir, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter and note of yesterday's date, by which you oblige me officially to explain to you that I have no cognizance of any emperor being actually upon this island, or of any person possessing such dignity having (as stated by you) come hither with me in the *Northumberland*. With regard to yourself, and the other officers of distinction who have accompanied you here," and so he proceeds. Napoleon was one of these! Cockburn complacently sends the correspondence to Bathurst, with a note in which he speaks of "General Bonaparte (if by the term 'emperor' he meant to designate that person)." This is too much even for Forsyth.

Lowe carried on this puerile affectation with scrupulous fidelity. Hobhouse sent his book on the Hundred Days to Napoleon, writing inside it "*Imperatori Napoleoni.*" This, though the inscription, after all, in strictness meant "To General Napoleon," the conscientious Lowe sequestrated. And on this occasion he laid down a principle. He had allowed letters directed under the imperial title to reach Napoleon from his relations or his former subjects, "but this was from an English person." A Mr. Elphinstone, who was grateful for attentions paid to a wounded brother at Waterloo, sent him some chess-men from

Digitized by Google

China. Lowe made difficulties about forwarding these because they bore N and a crown. We feel tempted to ask if Napoleon's linen, marked as it was with the objectionable cipher, was admitted to the honors of the island laundry.

It would be easy to multiply instances of Lowe's childishness in this respect, but we will only add one more. Three weeks before his death the sick captive sent Coxe's *Life of Marlborough*, as a token of goodwill, to the officers of the Twentieth Regiment. Unfortunately, the imperial title was written or stamped on the title-page, and the present, under the orders of the governor, was declined. In these days the Twentieth Regiment would perhaps not mind possessing the *Life* of the greatest of English generals given by the greatest of the French.

It is humiliating to be obliged to add that this pettiness survived even Napoleon himself. On the Emperor's coffin-plate his followers desired to place the simple inscription "Napoleon," with the date and place of his birth and death. Sir Hudson refused to sanction this, unless "Bonaparte" were added. But the Emperor's suite felt themselves unable to agree to the style which their master had declined to accept. So there was no name on the coffin. It seems incredible, but it is true.

What are the grounds on which the British government took up so unchivalrous and undignified an attitude? They are paraded by Scott with the same apologetic melancholy with which his own Caleb Balderstone sets forth the supper of the Master of Ravenswood. They appear to be as follows:

(1) "There could be no reason why Britain, in compassionate courtesy, should give to her prisoner

Digitized by Google

a title which she had refused to him *de jure*, even while he wielded the empire of France *de facto*."

The sentence would be more accurately put thus, and then it seems to answer itself: "There could be no reason why Britain, when there was nothing to be got out of him in exchange, should give to her prisoner a title which she had been perfectly ready to acknowledge when there was something to be gained." For she had accredited Lords Yarmouth and Lauderdale to negotiate with the Emperor in 1806, while the imperial title and its representative are duly set forth in the protocols of the Congress of Châtillon to which both Napoleon and the Prince Regent sent plenipotentiaries, and when, but for the distrust or fatalism or madness of Napoleon, a treaty would have been signed by both. There is, then, something of the ostrich in the refusal of Great Britain to recognize the style of Emperor. And it seems, to say the least of it, in face of what occurred in 1806 and 1814, a strong statement of Scott's to assert that "on no occasion whatsoever, whether directly or by implication, had Great Britain recognized the title of her prisoner to be considered as a sovereign prince." Are, then, plenipotentiaries accredited to other than sovereign princes or republics, or are plenipotentiaries from any other source admitted to the congresses of nations? Are we to understand, then, that, when Yarmouth and Lauderdale went to Paris with their full powers, or when Castlereagh and Caulaincourt compared theirs at Châtillon, the British government did not "by implication," though not "directly," recognize Napoleon as Emperor? With whom, then, were Yarmouth and Lauderdale dealing in 1806, or Castle-

Digitized by Google

reagh in 1814? It is declared, indeed, on good authority, that in the negotiations which led up to the peace of Amiens the British plenipotentiaries hinted their readiness to recognize the First Consul as King of France. Napoleon turned a deaf ear. Pasquier, a candid critic, points out that at Châtillon Britain, "which had so long and so perseveringly refused to recognize Napoleon as Emperor of the French, found herself the power most anxious to treat with him, as she would with a sovereign whose rights had been most incontestably recognized."

Again, in what capacity, and to whom, was Sir Neil Campbell accredited to Elba? By the protocol of April 27, 1814, Britain had recognized the sovereignty of Elba. Who, then, was the sovereign? Was it "General Bonaparte"? But Sir Neil officially signed documents in which he was called "S. M. l'Empereur Napoléon."

It is true, however, that Britain, in view of the fact that the whole Continent had bowed before Napoleon, had some reason to feel a just pride in that she, at any rate, had never bent the knee, had never formally and directly acknowledged him as Emperor. This was a successful point in her policy, and had caused the keenest annoyance to Napoleon. But is it not also true that this very fact gave her a matchless opportunity of displaying a magnanimity which would have cost her nothing, and raised her still higher, by allowing, as an act of favor to a vanquished enemy, an honorary title which she had never conceded as a right to the triumphant sovereign of the West?

But "the real cause lay a great deal deeper," says Scott. "Once acknowledged as Emperor, it followed,

Digitized by Google

of course, that he was to be treated as such in every particular, and thus it would have become impossible to enforce such regulations as were absolutely demanded for his safe custody." Shallow indeed must the government have been that deemed this reason "deep." For, to any such pretension on the part of Napoleon, it need only have opposed precedents, if, indeed, precedents were necessary, drawn from his own reign; though, in our judgment, it would have been true, as well as complimentary, to say that the circumstances were as unprecedented as the prisoner. Never before, indeed, has the peace and security of the universe itself required as its first and necessary condition the imprisonment of a single individual.

But for a government which loved precedents it would have been sufficient to allege the case of King Ferdinand of Spain, interned at Valençay in the strictest custody. Napoleon might indeed have rejoined that he did not recognize Ferdinand as King, though he was so by the abdication of his father, by the acknowledgment of the Spaniards, and by hereditary right. But Napoleon's rejoinder would only have assisted our government, who would have pointed out that neither had they recognized him.

There was, however, a higher precedent yet. There is a sovereign whose pretensions soar far above empire, who is as much above terrestrial thrones, dominations, and powers as these in their turn are above their subjects. The Pope asserts an authority short only, if it be short, of the Divine government of the world. He claims to be the vice-regent and representative of God on earth, the disposer and deposer of crowns. Napoleon boasted that he was an anointed sovereign; it was the Pope who anointed him. Yet

Digitized by Google

this very superintendent and source of sovereignty was, without being deprived of his sublime character, put into captivity by Napoleon, not as Napoleon was confined, but almost as malefactors are imprisoned. There was no idle discussion then of "irreverence to the person of a crowned head," nor, on the other hand, of denial of the dignity of the papacy. The wearer of the triple crown was placed under lock and key by Napoleon because it suited his purpose, just as Napoleon was kept in custody for the convenience and security of the coalition.

We think, then, that Napoleon had given convincing proof that he did not hold that it was impossible to imprison a crowned head, or impossible to keep a crowned head in custody without sanctioning "his claim to the immunities belonging to that title," and that he could have opposed no argument on that point which even our government could not have controverted with ease.

But, says Sir Walter, "if he was acknowledged as Emperor of France, of what country was Louis XVIII. king?" This, indeed, is Caleb's "hinder end of the mutton ham" with a vengeance.

In the first place, Napoleon never at any time was styled Emperor of France, nor did he now wish to be called anything but the Emperor Napoleon. No one could deem that that title would affect the actual occupant of the throne of France; there was no territorial designation implied; it might be as Emperor of Elba that the style was accorded.

But, secondly, no more preposterous argument could be used by a British ministry. They represented the only government that had really committed the offence which they now pretended to appre-

Digitized by Google

hend. For more than forty years their reigning sovereign had indeed styled himself King of France, though the fifteenth and sixteenth Louis had been occupying the actual throne and kingdom of France for three-fourths of the time. For thirty-three years of this period—till 1793—there had been simultaneously two kings of France, of whom the King of Britain was the groundless aggressor and pretender. The British title of King of France had been dropped under Napoleon's consulate (when the union with Ireland necessitated a new style), possibly not without the desire of conciliating him. But the particular objection stated by Scott in the text came with a particularly bad grace from the ministers of George III., or, indeed, from the ministers of any English sovereign since Edward III. All this is formal and trivial enough, but the whole argument concerns a formal triviality.

It is strange that the antiquarian Scott should have forgotten all this. But it is, at any rate, fortunate for the British government that they did not use Scott's belated argument to Napoleon himself, who would have pounced like a hawk on so suicidal a contention. And he would further have reminded them that he had punctiliously reserved and accorded to Charles IV. full regal dignity, though he had placed his own brother Joseph on the throne of Spain.

But Sir Walter (and we quote him because his reasoning on this subject is the most pleasing and plausible) denies to Napoleon the title of Emperor, not merely in respect of France, but in respect of Elba. Napoleon's "breach of the Treaty of Paris was in essence a renunciation of the Empire of Elba; and the reassumption of that of France was so far from

Digitized by Google

being admitted by the allies that he was declared an outlaw by the Congress at Vienna." We know of no renunciation in form or "in essence" of the title of Emperor of Elba. When Napoleon landed at Fréjus, he was, we suppose, in strict form the Emperor of Elba making war on the King of France. But, either way, this is a puerility unworthy of discussion.

It is, however, true that the Congress of Vienna had outlawed Napoleon. "In violating the convention which had established him in the island of Elba, Bonaparte had destroyed the only title to which his existence was attached. . . . The powers, therefore, declare that Napoleon Bonaparte has placed himself outside civil and social relations, and as the enemy and disturber of the tranquillity of the world has delivered himself *à la vindicte publique.*" Truly a compendious anathema. The curses of the mediæval papacy, or of the Jewry which condemned Spinoza, were more detailed but not more effective. But, unluckily, the first breach in the convention, which established him in the island of Elba, was not made by Napoleon, but by the other side. The main obvious necessity for Napoleon in the island of Elba, or elsewhere, was that he should live. With that object the signatories of that treaty had stipulated that he should receive an income on the Great Book of France of two millions of francs; that his family should receive an income of two millions and a half of francs; that his son should have as his inheritance the Duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla, and should at once assume the title of prince of those states. Not one of these stipulations, which were the compensation for his abdication, had been observed when Napoleon left Elba. Neither he nor his relatives

Digitized by Google

had ever received a franc. The emperors of Russia and Austria, as well as Lord Castlereagh, urged on Talleyrand the execution of the treaty. They insisted on it as a question of honor and good faith. To them Talleyrand could only answer confusedly that there was danger in supplying what might be used as the means of intrigue. To his master he could only hint that the powers seemed to be in earnest, and that possibly an arrangement might be made by which Britain might be jockeyed into furnishing the funds. It is a tale of ignominy and broken faith, but neither lie with Napoleon. The application on his behalf for the payment of the subsidy when due was not even answered by the French government. Napoleon at St. Helena detailed no less than ten capital and obvious breaches of this treaty committed by the allies. So fanatical an opponent of the Emperor as Lafayette declares that it seemed a fixed policy of the Bourbons to drive Napoleon to some act of despair. His family, says the marquis, were plundered. Not merely was the stipulated income not paid to him, but the ministry boasted of the breach of faith. His removal to St. Helena, as Lafayette, in spite of contradiction, insists, was demanded, and insidiously communicated to Napoleon as a plan on the point of execution. Projects for his assassination were favorably considered, though these, as beyond the provisions of the treaty, may be considered as outside our present argument. For under this head the contention is simply this, that it was the allies, and not Napoleon, that broke the Treaty of Fontainebleau; that, on the contrary, he himself observed the treaty until, on its non-fulfilment being flagrant, he quitted Elba and landed in France. In truth, he might well

Digitized by Google

allege that, by the non-fulfilment of the treaty, he was starved out of Elba. We do not contend that this was his sole or even main motive in leaving Elba. We only set it up as against the contention of the allies that he was outlawed by breach of the treaty. Were it internationally correct that he should be outlawed for the rupture of that treaty, all the other signatory sovereigns should have been outlawed too.

And, after this decree of outlawry was promulgated, the situation had materially changed in Napoleon's favor; for France, by a plebiscite, had consecrated what he had done. It is the fashion to sneer at plebiscites, and they are not always very reliable. But this was the only possible expression of French opinion, the only possible form of French ratification. The will of the nation condoned or approved his return, just as it allowed the Bourbons to pass away in silence, without an arm raised to prevent or to defend them. We could, perhaps, scarcely expect the coalition to take into consideration so trifling a matter as the will of the nation. But it is hard to see why the choice of the nation should be placed outside the pale of humanity, while the rejected of the nation and the deliberate violator of the Treaty of Fontainebleau should be replaced with great circumstance on the throne.

But, it may be said, if the British government in this matter was mean and petty, was not Napoleon meaner and pettier? Should he not have been above any such contention? What did it matter to him? His name and fame were secure. Would Lord Bacon repine at not being known as Viscount of St. Albans? No man will ever think of asking, as Pitt said, whether Nelson was a baron, a viscount, or an earl.

Digitized by Google

With this view we have much sympathy. We may at once admit that Napoleon had risen to an historical height far above the region of titles, and that the name of General Bonaparte—the young eagle that tore the very heart out of glory—is to our mind superior to the title of First Consul or of Emperor. We may also remember that Charles V., on its being notified to him that the Diet had accepted his renunciation, said: "The name of Charles is now enough for me, who henceforward am nothing"; that he at once desired that in future he was to be addressed not as Emperor, but as a private person, had seals made for his use "without crown, eagle, fleece, or other device," and refused some flowers which had been sent to him because they were contained in a basket adorned with a crown.

As against this we may point out that Napoleon was emphatically, as Napoleon III. said of himself, a parvenu Emperor. To Charles V., the heir of half the world, the descendant of a hundred kings, it could matter little what he was called after abdication, for nothing could divest him of his blood or his birth. Moreover, Charles's wish was to be a monk; his gaze was fixed on heaven; he had lost the whole world to gain his own soul. But to the second son of a Corsican lawyer with a large family and slender means the same remark does not apply, and the same reflection would not occur. The habits and feelings of sovereignty were more essential and precious to him, who had acquired them by gigantic effort, than to those who inherited them without question or trouble. He carried this idiosyncrasy to a degree which they would have thought absurd. The title of Emperor of Elba was in itself burlesque. The

Digitized by Google

grand marshal in his hut at St. Helena transcends some of the characters who mum to Offenbach's music. Princes born in the purple would have seen this, and shrunk from the ridicule which such associations might cast on their sacred attributes of substantial sovereignty. But to Napoleon the title of Emperor represented the crown and summit of his dazzling career, and he declined to drop it at the bidding of a foreign enemy.

If this were all to be said for him it would be little. This, however, is but a small part of the argument. Napoleon took broader and higher ground. He considered, and we think justly, that the denial of the title Emperor was a slight on the French nation, a contemptuous denial of their right to choose their own sovereign, an attempt to ignore many years of glorious French history, a resolve to obliterate the splendid decade of Napoleon's reign. If he were not Emperor, he said, no more was he General Bonaparte, for the French nation had the same right to make him sovereign that they had to make him general. If he had no right to the one title, he had no right to the other. We think that, in asserting the title as a question of the sovereign right and independence of the French people, he was standing on firm ground.

But, in truth, his position is not firm; it is impregnable. Scott devotes an ill-advised page to asking why Napoleon, who had wished to settle in England *incognito*, like Louis XVIII., who lived there as Count of Lille, did not condescend to live *incognito* at St. Helena. "It seems," says Sir Walter, contemptuously, "that Napoleon . . . considered this veiling of his dignity as too great a concession on his part

Digitized by Google

to be granted to the governor of St. Helena." This is an amazing sentence, when we remember Scott's advantages: "the correspondence of Sir Hudson Lowe with His Majesty's government having been opened to our researches by the liberality of Lord Bathurst, late secretary of state for the Colonial Department." The fact is, of course, that Napoleon, deliberately and formally, in September or October, 1816 (when he referred to a similar offer made through Montholon to Cockburn eight months before), proposed to assume the name of Colonel Muiron, or of Baron Duroc. This was in reply to a note from Lowe to O'Meara, of October 3d, in which the governor says: "If he (Napoleon) wishes to assume a feigned name, why does he not propose one?" Napoleon took him at his word, and so put him eternally in the wrong. The negotiation was carried on through O'Meara, and lasted some weeks. Once or twice the high contracting parties appeared to be on the point of agreement, but we have no doubt that Sir Hudson wished to gain time to refer to his government. Lowe, according to Montholon, suggested the title of Count of Lyons, which Napoleon rejected. "I can," he said, "borrow the name of a friend, but I cannot disguise myself under a feudal title." This seems sensible enough, but he had a better reason still. This very title had been discussed on their first arrival at St. Helena, and Napoleon had appeared not averse to it, till Gourgaud had objected that it would be ridiculous, as the canons of Lyons Cathedral were counts of Lyons, and that the Emperor could not assume an ecclesiastical *incognito*. This was conclusive. Meanwhile, the governor was referring the question home. We do not know in what

Digitized by Google

terms, for it is characteristic of Forsyth's murky compilation that he only prints Bathurst's reply. That reply is, indeed, amazing. Napoleon had offered a simple and innocent means of getting rid of what was not merely a perpetual irritation, but an absolute barrier to communication, for the governor ignored all papers in which the imperial title occurred, and Napoleon ignored all others. "On the subject," says Bathurst, "of General Bonaparte's proposition I shall probably not give you any instruction. It appears harsh to refuse it, and there may arise much embarrassment in formally accepting it." We cannot conjecture the nature of the embarrassment apprehended by our colonial secretary. Forsyth, however, has been so fortunate, from the resources at his command, as to divine the minister's meaning. The assumption of an *incognito* is, it appears, the privilege of monarchs, and not even thus indirectly could the British government concede to Napoleon the privilege of a monarch. This particular privilege is shared by the travelling public, and even by the criminal population, who make most use of it. It would be as sagacious to refuse to a country squire the right to be addressed as "Sir" by his gamekeeper, because princes are so addressed, as to deny an assumed name to Napoleon because sovereigns and others use one when they travel *incognito*. So we are still in the dark, more especially as it was Lowe who invited Napoleon to avail himself of this "privilege." But Napoleon had thus done his best; he could do no more; the blame and responsibility for all further embarrassment about title must remain not with him, not even with Lowe, but with the ministers of George IV.

Digitized by Google

Lowe, by-the-bye, had made a characteristically tactless suggestion of his own to solve the difficulty. He proposed to give Napoleon "the title of Excellency, as due to a field marshal." This judicious effort having failed, he himself cut the Gordian knot, dropped the "General," substituted "Napoleon," and called the Emperor "Napoleon Bonaparte," as it were John Robinson.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

THE MONEY QUESTION

WE pass from the question of title, on which we have been compelled to dilate, because it was the root of all evil, to the question of finance, which, fortunately—for it is the most squalid of the St. Helena questions—may be treated more briefly, as it is only incidental to others. The question of title has even its bearing on finance, for our government may have held that if Napoleon was to be treated as an abdicated monarch, he might be held to require an expensive establishment. But the war had been costly, and the prisoner must be cheap. The most expensive luxury was Sir Hudson himself; his salary was £12,000 a year. Napoleon and his household, fifty-one persons in all, were to cost £8000. What more he required he might provide for himself. The real cost seems to have been £18,000 or £19,000 a year, though Lowe admits that Napoleon's own wants were very limited. But everything on the island was scarce and dear, "raised," as Lowe said, "to so extravagant a price," and Lowe pointed out that Bathurst's limit was impossible. The governor magnanimously raised the captive to an equality with himself. He fixed the allowance at £12,000, and eventually there was rather more latitude. It is only fair to say that Lowe was, in this matter, less ungenerous than Bathurst, his official chief.

Digitized by Google

But, in the mean time, much had happened. Lowe was ordered by Bathurst to cut down the expenses of these fifty-one people, in the dearest place in the world, where, by all testimony, every article, even of food, was three or four times as costly as elsewhere, to £8000 a year. He writes to Montholon as to the household consumption of wine and meat. Napoleon seems to us to have treated the matter at this stage with perfect propriety. He said: "Let him do as he pleases, so long as he does not speak to me about it, but leaves me alone." Even Sir Walter Scott regrets that Lowe's strict sense of duty impelled him to speak to the Emperor about such matters. "We could wish," he says, "that the governor had avoided entering upon the subject of the expenses of his detention with Napoleon in person." The Emperor put the point tersely enough. "*Il marchande ignominieusement notre existence,*" he said. And when Bertrand asks for a duplicate list of supplies to the Emperor, as a check on the servants, his master reproves him. "Why take the English into our confidence about our household affairs? Europe has its glasses fixed on us; the governor will know it; the French nation will be altogether disgraced." At the same time Napoleon did not disdain, as he had not when on the throne disdained, to send for his steward and go into his accounts. He tried to make, and did make, some reductions, but he could not discuss these household details with his jailer.

Then Lowe writes again, and Napoleon, visiting the table of his household, finds scarcely enough to eat. This rests only on the authority of Las Cases, but it is not improbable that the authorities of the kitchen

Digitized by Google

may have made a practical demonstration against the new economies. However that may be, Napoleon orders his silver to be broken up and sold. Montholon pleads in vain, and partially disobeys. Three lots of silver are sold at a tariff fixed by Lowe. Montholon has the Emperor's dinner served on common pottery. Napoleon is ashamed of himself—he cannot eat without disgust, and yet as a boy he always ate off such ware. "We are, after all, nothing but big babies." And his joy is almost infantine when Montholon next day confesses his disobedience, and restores uninjured the favorite pieces of plate.

And, indeed, the last sale of silver had vanquished Lowe. He expressed lively regret, says Montholon, and was evidently afraid of the blame that this scandal might bring on him. At any rate, Napoleon remained master of the field, and there was no more trouble about money. The whole proceeding was, of course, a comedy. Napoleon had no need to sell a single spoon. He had ample funds in Paris, and ample funds even at St. Helena. And yet we cannot blame him. He was fighting the British government in this matter, and we can scarcely hold that the government was in the right. He had no weapons to fight with, and all that he could do was in some way or other to appeal to the world at large. This he did by breaking up his plate. It was a fact that must be known to every inhabitant of the island; it could not be suppressed by Lowe; thus it must soon be public property in Europe. Helpless as he was, he won the battle, and we cannot refrain from a kind of admiration, both at the result and at the meagreness of his means. Later on he attempted the same effect on a smaller scale. Fuel was short

Digitized by Google

at Longwood, and Napoleon ordered Noverraz, his servant, to break up his bed and burn it. This, we are told, produced a great effect among the "yam-stocks" (for so were the inhabitants of St. Helena nicknamed), "and the tyranny of the governor," Gourgaud gravely adds, "is at its last gasp."

Theatrical strokes were, of course, by no means unfamiliar to him. Like all great men, he was a man of high imagination, and this imagination made him keenly alive to scenic effect. While on the throne he had done much in this way, generally with success. He liked to date his victorious despatches from the palace of a vanquished monarch: he would fly into a histrionic passion before a scared circle of ambassadors: he would play the bosom friend with a brother emperor for weeks at a time. He studied his costumes as carefully as any stage manager of these latter days. He would have placed in a particular part of the ranks veterans whose biographies had been supplied to him, and would delight them with the knowledge of their services. Metternich declares that the announcement of his victories was prepared with similar care. Rumors of defeat were sedulously spread; the ministers appeared uneasy and depressed; then, in the midst of the general anxiety, the thunder of cannon announced a new triumph. And his effects were generally happy. During the Russian campaign there are two more dubious instances, one of which was at least open to criticism, the other of which certainly caused disgust. In the midst of the terrible anxieties of his stay at Moscow, with fire and famine around him, with winter and disaster menacing his retreat, he dictated and sent

Digitized by Google

home an elaborate plan for the reorganization of the Théatre Française. This, of course, was to impress his staff with the ease and detachment of his mind, and France with the conviction that the administration of the empire was carried on from Moscow with the same universal and detailed energy as in Paris. Later on, when he had to avow overwhelming calamities, he ended the ghastly record of the twenty-ninth bulletin by the announcement that the health of the Emperor had never been better. He calculated that this sentence would display him as the semi-divinity superior to misfortune, and maintain France in the faith that, after all, his well-being was the one thing that signified: that armies might pass and perish so long as he survived. It was inspired, perhaps, by a recollection of the sovereign sanctity with which Louis XIV. had sought to encompass himself. It was, at any rate, the assertion of an overpowering individuality. We have something of the same nature in our own annals, though widely differing in degree and in conception. It is said that the order for the famous signal of Trafalgar, "England expects every man to do his duty," ran at first, "Nelson expects every man to do his duty." The sense of individuality, sublime in the admiral before the supreme victory, revolted mankind with the apparent selfishness of the general, who had led a nation to court and undergo disaster, in the very hour of catastrophe. And yet mankind, perhaps, was hardly just. The assertion of personality had been, in Napoleon's case, such a strength that he could not afford to dispense with it even when it seemed inopportune. And we must remember that those who took part in the Russian campaign testify that the first question, the first anxiety

Digitized by Google

of all, was, "How is the Emperor? Does he keep his health?"

On this question of expense, O'Meara represents Napoleon as making remarks so characterized by his excellent common-sense that we may believe them to be authentic. "Here, through a mistaken and scandalous parsimony, they (your ministers) have counteracted their own views, which were that as little as possible should be said of me, that I should be forgotten. But their ill-treatment, and that of this man, have made all Europe speak of me. . . . There are still millions in the world who are interested in me. Had your ministers acted wisely, they would have given a *carte blanche* for this house. This would have been making the best of a bad business, have silenced all complaints, and . . . would not have cost more than £16,000 or £17,000 a year."

We might almost have forgiven the petty finance of the government, had it not in one single instance overreached itself. Napoleon had asked for some books, mainly to enable him to write his memoirs. The government supplied the books as "an indulgence," we presume, not inconsistent "with the entire security of his person"; but they sent him in the bill, or rather a demand, for the sum. Napoleon ordered Bertrand to refuse to pay this without a detailed account. So on his death the books were impounded by Lowe, and sold in London for a few hundred pounds, less than a quarter of what had been spent in procuring them. Their original cost had been fourteen hundred pounds, but Napoleon had added greatly to their value. Many of them, says Montholon, were covered with notes in the Emperor's handwriting; almost all bore traces of his study of

Digitized by Google

them. Had this asset been preserved to the nation, we might have been inclined to shut our eyes as to its history and origin. The penny-unwise and pound-foolish policy of the government lost both reputation and result.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

THE QUESTION OF CUSTODY

THE last group of grievances related to the question of custody. The main object of the coalesced governments was, not unnaturally, that under no circumstances should Napoleon escape from confinement and trouble the world again. So they chose the most remote island that they could think of, and converted it laboriously into a great fortress. Strangers could scarcely conceal their mirth as they saw Lowe adding sentry to sentry, and battery to battery, to render more inaccessible what was already impregnable; although, before leaving England, he had avowed to Castlereagh that he saw no possible prospect of escape for Napoleon but by a mutiny of the garrison. Nevertheless, he increased the precautions at compound interest. Las Cases, in his intercepted letter to Lucien, described them with some humor, and declared that the posts established on the peaks were usually lost in the clouds. Montchenu, the French commissioner, declared that if a dog were seen to pass anywhere, at least one sentinel was placed on the spot. He is indeed copious on the subject, though he considered his interest and responsibility in the matter second only to those of Lowe himself. He details with pathetic exactitude the precautions taken. The plain of Longwood,

Digitized by Google

where Napoleon lived, is, he says, separated from the rest of the island by a frightful gully, which completely surrounds it, and is only crossed by a narrow tongue of land not twenty feet broad, so steep that if ten thousand men were masters of the island, fifty could prevent their arriving at Longwood. One can only arrive at Longwood by this pathway, and, in spite of these difficulties, the Fifty-third Regiment, a park of artillery, and a company of the Sixty-sixth are encamped at the gate. Farther on, nearer the town, there is another post of twenty men, and the whole enclosure is guarded, day and night, by little detachments in view of each other. At night the chain of sentries is so close that they almost touch each other. Add to this a telegraph station on the top of every hill, by which the governor receives news of his prisoner in one minute, or at most two, wherever he may be. It is thus evident that escape is impossible, and even if the governor were to permit it, the guardianship of the sea would prevent it. For, from the signal stations, a vessel can generally be descried at a distance of sixty miles. Whenever one is perceived a signal cannon is fired. Two brigs-of-war patrol round the island day and night; a frigate is placed at the only two places where it is possible to land. (No foreign vessel, it may be added, and only a few privileged British vessels, such as men-of-war, or ships bringing necessary provisions, appear to have been allowed under any pretext to communicate with the shore.)

Surely, then, the agonized apprehensions of the governor were misplaced; his custody might have been less strict, and Napoleon might have been allowed to keep himself in health by riding over this

Digitized by Google

barren rock without the accompaniment of a British officer. A boyish practical joke of his, soon after reaching the island, and Cockburn's remark on it, make this more clear. Napoleon, Bertrand, and Gourgaud are out riding, followed by Captain Poppleton. Bertrand begs Poppleton not to follow so close; Napoleon sets off at a gallop with Gourgaud; they soon lose Poppleton, who, it appears, was not a dashing horseman. Poppleton, disconsolate, returns and reports to the admiral. Cockburn laughs at the affair as a boyish joke, *une espièglerie de sous-lieutenant*, and says: "It is a good lesson for you, but as to danger of escape, there is none. My cruisers are so well posted round the island that the devil himself could not get out of it"—the same conviction that Lowe had expressed to Castlereagh.

Later on, when Napoleon was confined to the house by illness, the governor became alarmed. Was the prisoner in the house at all, or was he sliding down some steep ravine to a submarine boat? He determined on a firm and unmistakable policy. He sent (August 29, 1819) a letter to "Napoleon Bonaparte," giving that personage notice that the orderly officer must see him daily, come what may, and may use any means he may see fit to surmount any obstacle or opposition; that any of Napoleon's suite who may resist the officer in obtaining this access would be at once removed from Longwood and held responsible for any results that might occur; and that if the officer has not seen Napoleon by ten o'clock in the morning he is to enter the hall and force his way to Napoleon's room. Brave words, indeed! Napoleon replies through Montholon that there is no question for him of any choice between death and an igno-

Digitized by Google

minious condition of life, and that he will welcome the first—implying, of course, what he had often said, that he would resist the officer by force. What happens? On September 4th Lowe comes to withdraw his instructions. Forsyth omits all mention of this incident, but Montholon gives the documents, which can scarcely be fabricated. And we know that there was no result except that the unhappy officer at Longwood is stimulated to fresh exertions, and leads a miserable life. To such straits is he reduced for a sight of the prisoner that he is recommended to betake himself to the key-hole. Sometimes he is more fortunate, and sees a hat which may contain Napoleon's head. Sometimes he peeps through a window and sees the prisoner in his bath. On one of these occasions Napoleon perceived him, and, issuing forth, advanced towards the captain's hiding-place in appalling nudity. But, as a rule, the existence of this hapless officer is one of what hunting men would call blank days.

"April 3d.—Napoleon still keeps himself concealed. I have not been able to see him since the 25th ult. . . . April 19th.—I again waited on Montholon, and told him I could not see Napoleon. He appeared surprised, and said they had seen me. . . . I was nearly twelve hours on my legs this day endeavoring to see Napoleon Bonaparte before I succeeded, and I have experienced many such days since I have been stationed at Longwood. . . . 23d.—I believe that I saw Napoleon Bonaparte to-day in the act of stropping his razor in his dressing-room." Again the hapless Captain Nicholls reports: "I must here beg leave to state that in the execution of my duty yesterday I was upon my feet upwards of ten

Digitized by Google

hours, endeavoring to procure a sight of Napoleon Bonaparte, either in his little garden, or at one of his windows, but could not succeed; that during the whole of this time I was exposed to the observation and remarks of not only the French servants, but also to the gardeners and other persons employed about Longwood House; and that I have *very frequently* experienced days of this kind since I have been employed on this duty."

To such a pitch had mismanagement reduced the peremptory governor and his ministerial chiefs. Instead of "You must do this, and you must do that," his officer has to lead the life of a tout, and an unsuccessful tout, exposed to the derision of the gardeners and household as well as the ironical survey of the invisible prisoner. Napoleon had won the day, mainly through the wooden clumsiness of his opponents.

Were there any real attempts to get Napoleon away from St. Helena? We doubt it. On one occasion, after receiving despatches from Rio Janeiro, Lowe doubled, and even tripled, the sentries described by Montchenu! The French government had, indeed, discovered a "vast and complicated plan" to seize Pernambuco, where there were said to be two thousand exiles, and with this force to do something unexplained to remove Napoleon. A Colonel Latapie seems to have had the credit of this vast and complicated mare's nest. A "submarine vessel"—the constant bug-bear of British governments—capable of being at the bottom of the sea all day and of unnatural activity at night, was being constructed by "a smuggler of an uncommonly resolute character," called Johnstone, apparently a friend of O'Meara.

Digitized by Google

But the structure of the vessel excited suspicion, and she was confiscated before completion by the British government. Our great Scottish master of fiction narrates all this without a vestige of a smile. Another submarine vessel was being constructed on, it appears, the "Sommariva system," at Pernambuco, whence most of these legends are launched.

If Maceroni can be believed, which is at the least doubtful, O'Meara, on his return from St. Helena, made preparations on a large scale for the rescue of Napoleon. "The mighty powers of steam," says Maceroni, "were mustered to our assistance. British officers volunteered to exchange out of their regiments in Europe in order to contrive being put on duty at St. Helena. But I cannot enter into particulars." This, for obvious reasons, we regret. Maceroni, however, does inform us more specifically that this great enterprise split on the money difficulty, which resolved itself into a vicious circle. The mother of Napoleon was willing to hand over her whole fortune in return for the accomplished rescue of her son. O'Meara wanted money at once for the purposes of the scheme. The plan, he said, could not proceed without money: the money, she said, could only be given in payment for its success. So the conspiracy, if it ever existed, came to an end. The family of Bonaparte were by this time somewhat wary as to projects of rescue, and the inseparable incident of a demand for cash.

Forsyth happily preserves some of the indications of plots for escape which alarmed our government and their agent at St. Helena. Two silly and unintelligible anonymous letters addressed to some merchants in London; another with "an obscure al-

Digitized by Google

lusion to St. Helena, Cracow, and Philadelphia," addressed to a gentleman at Cracow; news of a fast-sailing vessel being equipped by a person named Carpenter in the Hudson River; these were the tidings that kept our government in an agony of precaution. But even Forsyth breaks down in the narrative of a ghostly vessel which harassed our government, and intimates that it must have been *The Flying Dutchman*. And at last the shadow of tragedy comes to darken the farce; for, a few months before the end, Bathurst expresses the belief that Napoleon is meditating escape. The supreme escape was, indeed, imminent, for death was at hand.

On the other hand, Montholon's testimony on this subject is direct and simple enough. A ship captain offered, according to Montholon, on two occasions, to get Napoleon off in a boat. A million francs was the price—to be paid on the Emperor's reaching American soil. Napoleon at once refused to entertain the proposal. And Montholon believes that under no circumstances would he have entertained it, even had a boat been able to reach the only possible point, and, what was also necessary, had the Emperor been able to conceal himself all day in a ravine, and descend at night to the coast, with the risk of breaking his neck a hundred times in the process.

Again, Las Cases has a plan, and Gourgaud thinks it practicable. Napoleon "discusses the chances of success, but distinctly declares that, were they all favorable, he would, none the less, refuse to have anything to do with a project of escape."

Montholon, after this, makes an entry which is significant enough. "A plan of escape," he says,

Digitized by Google

"is submitted to the Emperor. He listens without interest, and calls for the *Historical Dictionary.*"

Nor, as we have said, do we think that Napoleon ever entertained the idea of escaping in the garb of a waiter, or in a basket of dirty linen. The Russian government, in its memorial to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818, says that a feasible project of escape was laid before the Emperor. It was to have taken place on the evacuation of France by the allied armies. But the Emperor postponed it. This, however, is given on the authority of Gourgaud, and is probably one of the fantastic legends with which that officer, after his departure from Longwood, loved to tickle the irritable credulity of Sir Hudson Lowe.

Did he, indeed, wish to escape? On that point we have the strongest doubts.

Whither, indeed, could he fly? The United States of North America, his original choice of a destination, seemed the only possible refuge; and yet he firmly believed that he would soon be assassinated there by the emissaries of the restored government in France. To all proposals of escape he always made, according to Montholon, this reply: "I should not," he said, "be six months in America without being murdered by the assassins of the Comte d'Artois. Remember Elba—was not my assassination concerted there? But for that brave Corsican, who had accidentally been placed as quartermaster of *gendarmerie* at Bastia, and who warned me of the departure for Porto Ferrajo of the *garde-du-corps*, who afterwards confessed all to Drouot, I was a dead man. Besides, one must always obey one's destiny, for all is written above. Only my martyrdom can restore the crown to

Digitized by Google

my dynasty. In America I shall only be murdered or forgotten. I prefer St. Helena." When another plan is presented to him, he again lays stress on the dynastic argument. "It is best for my son that I should remain here. If he lives, my martyrdom will restore his crown to him."

For a man in middle life, corpulent and listless, to attempt, under any circumstances, to leave a lonely rock, garrisoned by a large military force and surrounded by vigilant cruisers, in order to reach, after a long and perilous passage by ocean, a country where he believed he would be murdered, seems preposterous. And yet these are the facts of the case. But in one respect they are understated, as they omit the most material fact of all.

For Napoleon was no longer what he had been. He himself had laid down the law, tersely and inimitably, for himself and others, on this subject. "Ordener is worn out," he had said at Austerlitz of one of his generals. "One has but a short time for war. I am good for another six years, and then I shall have to stop." Strangely enough, his judgment was exactly verified. Six years and a month from Austerlitz would have brought him to 1812, to the Russian campaign, which, had he observed his own rule, he would have avoided. It is noteworthy that throughout 1812, and notably at the battle of Borodino, when he was prostrate, those attached to his person, like Ségur, observed a remarkable change in his health and energy. Ségur, indeed, seems to attribute the morbid and feverish activity which drove him into that fatal expedition to constitutional disease. Some vivid scraps of the note-book of Duroc, his closest attendant and friend, relating to the begin-

Digitized by Google

ning of this war, have been preserved, which confirm this view: "Aug. 7.—The Emperor in great physical pain; he took opium prepared by Méthivier. 'Duroc, one must march or die. An Emperor dies standing, and so does not die. . . . *We must bring this fever of doubt to an end.*'" On his return the change was more marked. Chaptal, a scientific observer of his master, says that it was remarkable. Napoleon had become stout in 1809, and had then to some extent degenerated. But after Moscow Chaptal observed a much greater transformation. There was a notable failure in the sequence of his ideas. His conversation consisted mainly of incoherent and imaginative bursts. There was no longer the same force of character; not the same passion or power of work. Riding fatigued him. Somnolence and the pleasures of the table gained on him. It is true that, with his back to the wall, he fought an unrivalled campaign of defence and despair. But this was the last flash of the Conqueror. He did not, indeed, cease to be a great captain. He could still plan in the cabinet. But he was no longer so formidable or so active in the field. The matchless supremacy of his youth had passed away.

At Elba, again, he physically degenerated. A terrible activity had become necessary to his life. The suppressed energy, the necessary change of habits, injured his health. He became enormously fat; this was the great change that struck his adherents on his return to the Tuileries in the following March. He indeed used this circumstance as an argument to prove his change of character in a manner that suggests a reminiscence of Shakespeare. Striking his stomach with both hands, "Is one ambitious when

Digitized by Google

one is as fat as I am?" He had no longer that "lean and hungry look" that denotes the "dangerous" man who "thinks too much." It was, moreover, soon clear that his health was broken. His brother Lucien found him ill, wrote details which are not printed, and assured M. Thiers that his brother was suffering from a bladder complaint. Thiers had other evidence to the same effect, though he holds, and Houssaye with him, that Napoleon's energy disproves the probability of serious ailment. Savary testifies that he could scarcely sit his horse on the battle-field. Lavallette, who saw him the night he left Paris for Flanders, says that he was then suffering severely from his chest. In any case, it was abundantly evident that the Napoleon who returned in March, 1815, was very different from the Napoleon who had left in April, 1814.

We will go so far as to risk an opinion that when he returned from Elba he had realized that his career as a conqueror was over. In Elba he had had leisure, for the first time since he attained power, to take stock, calmly and coldly, of his situation, and to remember his own maxim as to the limited period of life during which war can be carried on with success. We think, then, that he understood that his period of conquest was past. But this is not to say that his headstrong and imperious temperament could ever have been shaped into anything like a constitutional ruler, or that he could have restrained himself or his army into permanent pacification With his marshals he would, we think, have had no difficulty. But his pretorians would hardly have been so easy to satisfy. The limitation of his frontier, too, would have been a goad as well as an eyesore. Against these we balance the

Digitized by Google

partial exhaustion of his people and of himself, facts to which he could scarcely have been permanently blind.

During the Hundred Days, though he displayed what in another man would have been energy, he had ceased to be Napoleon. He was a changed, doomed man. "I cannot resist the conviction," says Pasquier, who was in constant contact with the men who surrounded him, "that his genius and his physical powers were alike in a profound decline." He allowed himself to be bullied by his new legislature, and displayed a certain helplessness which was a new and ominous sign. We are told, on the authority of Sismondi, that his ministers, to their astonishment, would constantly find him asleep over a book. Another of the strange new features of that period was a tendency to hold endless conversations, which must have occupied much precious time, and which betrayed a secret perplexity, very strange to him. Even on the eve of Waterloo, on the battle-field, to the amazement of Gérard and Grouchy, he wastes precious time in discoursing to them about politics in Paris, the Chamber and the Jacobins. This discursiveness was partly due, says Mollien, to a lassitude which would overcome him after a few hours' work. When this novel sensation came over him he sought rest and distraction in talk. But the salient proof of the change lay in his dealings with Fouché. He had not the energy to deal with Fouché. His main regret in reviewing that period at St. Helena was that he had not hanged or shot Fouché. But during the Hundred Days—nay, from the moment he arrives in Paris to the moment he boards the *Bellerophon*—he is fooled by Fouché, betrayed by Fouché,

Digitized by Google

and probably delivered over to the British by Fouché. Napoleon suffers all this patiently, though not ignorantly. He took a course, indeed, which combined the errors of all possible courses. He told Fouché that his intrigues were discovered, and kept Fouché as minister of police.

At last he shakes off the dust of Paris, its Parliament and its traitors, and joins his army. It might be thought that in the air of battle he would regain his strength. But it was not so. The strategy by which he silently and swiftly launched his army into Flanders was indeed a combination worthy of his best days. But on his arrival at the scene of war, his vigilant vitality, once superhuman, had forsaken him. He, formerly so keen for exact news of the enemy, seemed scarcely to care to know or inquire the movements of the allied armies. He, once so electrically rapid, had ceased to value time. His celerity of movement had been of the essence of his earlier victories. But on the morning of Ligny, and on the succeeding day, he lost many precious hours, and so, perhaps, the campaign. He himself acknowledges that, had he not been so tired, he should have been on horseback all the night before Waterloo; though, as it was, he mounted his horse an hour after midnight and rode till dawn.

Then comes the supreme battle. Napoleon appears to have watched it with some apathy, and, on seeing the catastrophe, to have calmly remarked, "*Il paraît qu'ils sont mêlés,*" and walked his horse off the field.

He flies to Paris, and there he is the same. He arrives at the Elysée at six o'clock in the morning on June 21st. He is received on the steps by Caulaincourt, whose tender and faithful arm supports him

Digitized by Google

into the palace. The army, he says, had done wonders, but had been seized by a panic. Ney, like a madman, had sacrificed his cavalry. He himself is suffocated, exhausted; he throws himself into a hot bath, and convokes his ministers. Lavallette saw him that morning, and gives, in a few words, a ghastly, speaking picture of his appearance: "As soon as he saw me he came to me with a fearful epileptic laugh. 'Ah, my God! my God!' he said, raising his eyes to heaven, and paced two or three times round the room. This emotion was only temporary; he soon recovered his self-command, and asked what was happening at the Chambers." He recognized afterwards that he should have gone that day, as it was urged on him, booted and muddy, to the Chambers, have harangued them, have tried the effect of his magnetic individuality, and, had they remained insensible, have entered their sitting in Cromwellian fashion. He should, too, he acknowledges, have had Fouché shot at once. Instead of this, he holds a council, from which Fouché, by his side, sends notes to rally the opposition in Parliament. As the council proceeds, the results of the traitor's manipulation become manifest. There is distress, and there is despair. The loyal adherents, the princes of his house, implore the Emperor to show energy; Napoleon sits numb. His carriage stands horsed in the court-yard ready to take him to the Chambers; it is sent away. In the face of treachery and opposition and intrigue he remains passive and resourceless. At last, at a second council, he mechanically signs his abdication, his antechambers empty at once, and his palace becomes a desert.

But outside the soldiers and the multitude clamor

Digitized by Google

for him; they adjure him not to desert them, but to organize and head a national resistance. A word from him, says his brother, would have put an end to his domestic foes. This is an exaggeration, for Lafayette had utilized the time which the Emperor had lost, and secured the National Guard. But the enthusiasm was formidable. It might have been the precursor of a successful revolution, had the Emperor cared to utilize it in that way. At any rate, it alarms Fouché and his satellites; they send the Emperor a hint, and he at once retires from his capital and his friends, sending his own carriage empty through the crowd of his adherents, as if they were his enemies, and hurrying off in another.

He retreats to Malmaison, where he is practically a prisoner. He will not move; he will not give an order; he sits reading novels. He will arrange neither for resistance nor for flight. One day decides both. He is induced to offer his services as general to the provisional government. The reply he receives is a direction to leave the country. He obeys without a word, and leaves in a quarter of an hour.

Arrived at Rochefort, he shows the same apathy, the same indecision, the same unconsciousness of the value of every moment. It seems clear that, had he acted with promptitude, he had reasonable chances of escaping to America. His brother Joseph had offered him one opportunity. Joseph, who bore a strong resemblance to the Emperor, proposed to change places with him, and let Napoleon embark in the American vessel in which he himself afterwards escaped. But Napoleon declared that anything in the nature of a disguise was beneath his dignity, though he had certainly not held this opin-

Digitized by Google

ion on his way to Elba. Again he might have attempted flight in a neutral (Danish) ship, or in a chassemarée (a swift, masted, coasting vessel), or in a frigate. Some young naval officers offered themselves as the crew either of a chassemarée or a rowing-boat which should steal through the blockade. But the frigate offered the best chances of success, and Maitland, in his narrative, admits that these were not slight. There were at the Île d'Aix at that moment two French frigates, besides smaller vessels. One of the captains was doubtful, if not hostile; but the other implored Napoleon to take the chance. He would attack the British ship, while the Emperor escaped in the other frigate. In former days the Emperor would not have hesitated to intrust Cæsar and his fortunes to such a hazard. But now he seemed under some maleficent charm or blight. He dawdled about, summoned councils of his suite to ask their advice as to what he had better do, displayed his every movement to the watchful enemy, did, in fact, everything that a few years before he would have despised any one for doing. At last he surrenders himself, helplessly, to the *Bellerophon*, where he sits dozing over *Ossian* on the deck. His suite confess to Maitland that much of his bodily activity and mental energy has disappeared.

Once only in that voyage did his apathy forsake him. At dawn, one morning, when the ship was making Ushant, the watch, to their unspeakable surprise, saw the Emperor issue from his cabin and make his way, with some difficulty, to the poop. Arrived there, he asked the officer on duty if the coast were indeed Ushant, and then, taking a telescope, he gazed fixedly at the land. From seven

Digitized by Google

till near noon he thus remained motionless. Neither the officers of the ship, nor his staff as they watched him, durst disturb that agony. At last, as the outline faded from his sight, he turned his ghastly face, concealing it as best he could, and clutched at the arm of Bertrand, who supported him back to his cabin. It was his last sight of France.

At St. Helena his lethargy becomes naturally more marked; it amazes himself. He spends hours in his bed, and hours in his bath. He soon ceases to dress till late in the afternoon. He is surprised to find that he is happiest in bed, he for whom the whole day had once been all too short.

And this is the man who, in the opinion of the British government and Sir Hudson Lowe, was likely to glide down an inaccessible rock, unperceived by ubiquitous sentries, and, in some unexplained manner, pass vigilant vessels of war, in order once more to disturb the world. It is safe to say that, had he effected the impossible and escaped, he could never have seriously disturbed the world again, except as a tradition.* But it was impossible for him to escape. Even had he been allowed to range over the whole island, had all the sentries been removed, it was out of the question for him, in his physical condition, given a reasonable police and watchful cruisers, to leave the island without the connivance of the governor. Napoleon himself, though he sometimes hoped to leave St. Helena, never, we are con-

*Scott, indeed, disputes this view by telling an anecdote which had greatly amused Napoleon himself. A grenadier, who saw him as he landed at St. Helena, exclaimed: "They told us he was growing old; he has forty good campaigns in his belly yet, damn him."

Digitized by Google

vinced, even thought of escape, though Gourgaud records a jesting scheme for this purpose, launched by the Emperor, amid laughter, after dinner. He based such meagre hopes as he entertained on the opposition party in Parliament, or on Princess Charlotte's succession to the crown. And so he desires Malcolm and Gourgaud to set forth all his grievances to that princess.

Napoleon had the faculty, when he chose, of creating a fool's paradise for himself. In the Russian campaign he had, for example, ordered his marshals to operate with armies which he knew had ceased to exist. When they remonstrated, he simply replied: "Why rob me of my calm?" When the allies invaded France he professed to rely greatly on the army of Marshal Macdonald. "Would you like," said the marshal to Beugnot, "to review my army? It will not take you long. It consists of myself and my chief of the staff. Our supplies are four straw chairs and a plank table." Again, during the campaign of 1814, the Emperor was detailing his plans to Marmont. Marmont was to do this and that with his corps of ten thousand men. At each repetition of this figure Marmont interrupted to say that he had only three. Yet Napoleon persisted to the end: "Marmont with his ten thousand men." But the strangest instance of this is detailed by Méneval, who tells us that when the Emperor added up numbers of his soldiers he always added them up wrong, and always swelled the total. So at St. Helena he really, we think, brought himself to believe that he would be released when Lord Holland became prime minister, or when Princess Charlotte ascended the throne. He sometimes even professed to be per-

Digitized by Google

suaded that the expense of his detention would induce the British government to agree to his liberation. Reports of the most amazing character were occasionally brought to Longwood, the invention, we should imagine, of the Jamestown gossips. O'Meara informs Napoleon one day, for example, that the Imperial Guard has retired into the Cevennes and that all France is in insurrection. All that we are told of the effect of this sensational news is that the Emperor plays *reversi*. Another day Montholon returns from Jamestown, where he has read the newspapers, and declares that all France demands the Emperor, that there is a universal rising in his favor, and that Britain is at the last gasp. We doubt if he put the slightest faith in this sort of report. He had, we suspect, very little hope of any kind. But such hope as he had rested on Princess Charlotte and Lord Holland. Lord Holland, because he, and, what was more important, Lady Holland, had enthusiastically espoused his cause; Princess Charlotte, partly because she was supposed to have expressed sympathy for him, partly, perhaps, because she had married Prince Leopold, who had wished to be his aide-de-camp. "That," said the Emperor, "is a lucky fellow not to have been named my aide-de-camp when he asked for it; for, had he been appointed, he would not now be on the steps of the English throne."

There was, indeed, one source of peril, of which both Lowe and the French commissioner were well aware, against which it was difficult to guard—the personal fascination exercised by the captive. Montchenu constantly deplores this ominous fact. Every one, he says, leaves Napoleon's presence in a state

Digitized by Google

of the greatest enthusiasm. "Were I you," said the marquis to the governor, "I would not allow a single stranger to visit Longwood, for they all leave it in a transport of devotion, which they take back with them to Europe." "What is most astonishing," says the Russian commissioner, "is the ascendancy that this man, dethroned, a prisoner, surrounded by guards and keepers, exercises on all who come near him. Everything at St. Helena bears the impress of his superiority. The French tremble at his aspect, and think themselves too happy to serve him. . . . The English no longer approach him but with awe. Even his guardians seek anxiously for a word or a look from him. No one dares to treat him as an equal." These alarming facts were coupled with the not less alarming good-nature of the captive. He would go into a cottage, sit down and chat with the people, who would receive "Sir Emperor" with awful joy. He would talk to slaves and give them money. He threatened, indeed, to become beloved. The governor was frightened out of his wits at this new and indefinable menace to the security of the island, so he at once retrenched the boundaries so that no cottages could be within them.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

LORD BATHURST

"NOTHING," wrote the Russian commissioner to his government after near three years' experience at St. Helena, "can be more absurd, more impolitic, less generous and less delicate than the conduct of the English to Napoleon." It would not be fair or just, however, to debit Lowe or Cockburn with the responsibility for these ignominies, or for the general principle of the Emperor's treatment. They were only the somewhat narrow and coarse agents of a sordid and brutal policy. It was the British ministry which is answerable, jointly and severally, for the treatment of Napoleon; and which, strangely enough, is equally condemned by the partisans of Lowe. "Worst of all," says the governor's most efficient advocate, " . . . was the conduct of the British government, which, viewed in itself, was utterly undignified; viewed from Sir Hudson Lowe's stand-point was unfair and treacherous." When, however, we remember who and what these ministers were, we cease to marvel. Vandal, in one of the most eloquent passages of his noble history, points out that the eventual victory of Great Britain over Napoleon was the victory of persistency over genius. "The men who governed in London, flung by the illness of George III. into a chaos of difficulties,

Digitized by Google

placed between a mad King and a discredited Regent, exposed to the virulent attacks of the opposition, to the revolt of injured interests, to the complaints of the City, face to face with a people without bread, and with an almost ruined commerce . . . sometimes despair of even maintaining Wellington at Lisbon. But in their extreme peril, none of them think of yielding—of asking, or even accepting, peace—or of sacrificing the British cause or British pride." Rarely, he continues, have men displayed more admirable proofs of cool and obstinate courage. "Yet, who are these men? Among them there is not a single minister of great renown, of a glorious past, of a superior intelligence. The successors of Pitt . . . have only inherited his constancy, his tenacity, his hatred. But, knowing that they bear the destinies of their country, and of the world, they derive from that consciousness a virtue of energy and patience which makes them equal to the greatest." Liverpool, Eldon, Bathurst, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth were men whose names can scarcely be said to glow in history. They had, however, felt doggedly that they must fight it out to the bitter end; and, supported throughout by the victories of their navy and the grim patience of their people, as well as, latterly, by military success, had pulled through and emerged victorious. But victory had not taught them magnanimity. They had caught their great enemy: their first wish was to get somebody else to shoot him or hang him, failing which, they were determined to lock him up like a pickpocket. All that they saw clearly was that he had cost them a great deal of trouble and a great deal of money, so that he must cost them as little more as possible. They were

Digitized by Google

honest men, acting up to their lights; we can only regret that the men were dull and the lights were dim.

The minister charged with carrying out this policy was Lord Bathurst, secretary of state for the joint department of War and the Colonies.

Who was Bathurst?

It is difficult to say. He was, we know, grandson of that secular Lord Bathurst who, sixty years after his first elevation to the peerage, was created an earl, and who, in the last months of his life, in his ninety-first year, was the subject of a famous apostrophe by Burke. He was, we know, son of that second Lord Bathurst who was the least capable of chancellors. He himself was one of those strange children of our political system who fill the most dazzling offices with the most complete obscurity. He had presided over the Foreign Office. He was now, and was for a term of fifteen years, a secretary of state. Yet even our most microscopic biographical dictionary may be searched in vain for more than a dry recital of the offices that he filled, the date of his birth, and the date of his death.

He was now in charge of Napoleon. He tersely instructed Lowe that the Emperor was to be treated, till further orders, as a prisoner of war, but that he was to be allowed "every indulgence which may be consistent with the entire security of his person." He then passed through Parliament an act of Draconian, but perhaps necessary, severity. Any British subject who should assist in Napoleon's escape, or, after his escape, assist him on the high seas, was to be punished with death without benefit of clergy. Lowe, by the bye, used to allude to this act in deli-

Digitized by Google

cate raillery of the commissioners. "After all, I cannot hang *you*," he would say. Meanwhile Bathurst was tightening the screw. Eight thousand pounds was to be the limit of Napoleon's expenditure on table and household; he was to pay all his own followers and servants, and the household was at once to be reduced by the magical number of four; no names or degrees were specified, so that it was clearly an economy of four mouths that was aimed at. The remainder were to be persuaded to leave him, as their residence in the island added greatly to the expense. It may be presumed, therefore, that the "indulgence, consistent," after all, "with the entire security of his person"—of intercourse with a few fellow-countrymen, and of the attendance of his old servants—was to be, if practicable, withdrawn. Lowe, moreover, was to draw the bonds more straitly than Cockburn. No communication was to reach Napoleon except through Lowe. The faculty accorded to Bertrand by the admiral of giving cards of admission which would enable visitors to Napoleon to pass the sentries was withdrawn. A declaration was to be signed by all the French courtiers and servants of the Emperor that they would submit to all regulations imposed on their master, and so forth. He attached great importance to enclosing Napoleon in a sort of area railing which he despatched from England, and which should add the final precaution to security. "We consider it," he writes, "a very essential point, particularly until the iron railing shall arrive, to ascertain, late in the evening and early in the morning, that he is safe." But it seems to have been found inexpedient to carry constraint too far. For the interest in the captive

Digitized by Google

was intense. Every scrap of news from St. Helena was eagerly devoured by the public. The craving for each fragment of intelligence was so great that it was scarcely possible to preserve from the avidity of the press the most private letters written from St. Helena. A lady who came from there in 1817 narrates how, on landing at Portsmouth, persons of all ranks seemed ready to tear the passengers in pieces for information about the captive. And, as soon as they reached the hotel, strangers brought portraits of Napoleon to have the likeness attested. Warden's worthless book was for the same reason extremely popular. Santini's not less worthless book was not less popular. It went through seven editions in a fortnight. So, at least, its author declares.

Lord Holland, too, raised in the House of Lords a debate on the treatment of Napoleon. And from this time forth there reigns a blander tone in the regulations of Bathurst. His next letter to Lowe, written a month after the debate, is couched in a spirit that may almost be deemed urbane. "You may assure him of your disposition to make his situation more comfortable by a supply of the publications of the day. . . . I think it right also to add that there exists in this country no indisposition to allow him the gratifications of the table—more especially of wine." And later on in the same year he expands the limit of even £12,000 a year, if that sum be inadequate for "such an establishment as would be requisite for a general officer of distinction." (Napoleon, it will be observed, has gradually risen from a "general not in employ" to "a general officer of distinction.")

Bathurst seems to have been in all respects as worthy of Lowe as Lowe of Bathurst, and to both

Digitized by Google

there was a common standard of tact and taste. Take the following specimen. Rats are the curse of St. Helena, and on this subject the secretary of state writes to the governor: "You will also receive a private letter from Mr. Goulburn on the great inconvenience to which he (Napoleon) is said to be exposed by the quantity of rats with which his house is infested. There is something so ludicrous in a fallen leader's complaint on such a subject, *and is one so little in unison with the animal's alleged sagacity,* that it is not a topic likely from choice to be brought forward as a grievance; but the number of these animals may amount to be a real one; and though I have reason to believe that the increase is owing to the negligence of his servants, *in which he is very willing to encourage them,* yet it is fit on every account that the subject should be examined and a proper remedy applied." We cannot call to mind any complaint of Napoleon's on the subject, though his house was overrun with these disgusting vermin. But the graceful allusions of the secretary of state, which we have italicized, lose none of their point from this circumstance; though he may be held to be going a little too far when he hints that the Emperor, always scrupulously dainty in such things, wilfully encouraged the negligence of his servants in order to promote the increase of rats.

When Napoleon is dying Bathurst touches a note which is almost sublime. "If he be really ill," writes the secretary of state, "he may derive some consolation by knowing that the repeated accounts which have of late been transmitted of his declining health have not been received with indifference. You will, therefore, communicate to General Buonaparte the

Digitized by Google

great interest which His Majesty has taken in the recent accounts of his indisposition, and the anxiety which His Majesty feels to afford him every relief of which his situation admits. You will assure General Buonaparte that there is no alleviation which can be derived from additional medical assistance, nor any arrangement consistent with the safe custody of his person at St. Helena (and His Majesty cannot now hold out any expectations of his removal) which His Majesty is not most anxious to afford," and so forth. The force of Bathurst could no further go. Fortunately, before this precious effusion was received at St. Helena, its prisoner was where the sympathy of George IV., strained through Bathurst, could not reach him. Scott thinks that it would have been a solace to him. Comment on such an opinion seems unnecessary.

The whole correspondence, so far as we know it, is sordid and pitiful enough. Making all allowances for the cost and exhaustion of the war, and for the natural anxiety that the great disturber of peace should not escape, it appears to us, at the end of the century in which it passed, a humiliating compound of meanness and panic. But the responsibility for this ignominious episode, this policy of petty cheeseparing and petty police, must rest not with the instruments, but with the principals; with the Liverpools and Bathursts at home, not with the Cockburns and Lowes at St. Helena; although the ministers, as we have seen, tried to dissociate themselves from the sinister reputation of Lowe by extending a conspicuously cold shoulder to him on his return.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE *dramatis personae* of this long tragedy are few in number, and some even of these, the Poppletons and the like, flit like ghosts across the stage, without voice or substance. Of Poppleton, for example, whose name occurs so frequently, we only know that he was long the orderly officer at Longwood; that he was not much of a horseman; that he sometimes dug potatoes; and that, on leaving, he surreptitiously accepted a snuff-box as a present from the Emperor, one of the greatest crimes in Lowe's long calendar. We have, indeed, occasional vivid glimpses, such as Napoleon's description of the admiral who succeeded Malcolm: He "reminds me of one of those drunken little Dutch skippers that I have seen in Holland, sitting at a table with a pipe in his mouth, a cheese and a bottle of Geneva before him." But there are other names which occur in every page of the various narratives, notably those of the Emperor's little suite. Of the characters not already noticed the grand marshal, Count Bertrand, and his wife take, of course, the first place.

Bertrand has one agreeable singularity—he wrote no book, and tells us nothing, which is in itself a pleasant contrast to the copious self-revelation of Gourgaud and Las Cases. He seems to have been

Digitized by Google

an excellent officer—Napoleon repeatedly said that he was the best engineer officer in existence, but this may possibly have been alleged for the purpose of teasing Gourgaud. He was, moreover, devoted to his master, but not less devoted to his wife. This double allegiance, which had already caused inconvenience at Elba, plunged him into constant difficulties with the Emperor, who resented it even on his death-bed. But Bertrand resisted his wife's entreaties that he would not accompany the Emperor to St. Helena, stayed till the end, though not without thoughts of going, and remains, in his loyal silence, the most sympathetic figure of the Emperor's surroundings. For some reason or another he was an object of Lowe's special hatred. But Henry, the friend of Lowe, and almost every other impartial authority, commend him. Napoleon on his death-bed ordered Bertrand to be reconciled to Lowe, and a reconciliation accordingly took place after the Emperor's death.

Mme. Bertrand was said to be an English creole by birth; on the English side a niece of Lord Dillon, and on the creole side a connection of the Empress Josephine. Her English origin had indeed caused her to be suspected at Elba of English sympathies, but of this not the slightest trace is discoverable. Her appearance seems to have possessed a singular charm. She was, says an English lady on the island, "a most engaging, fascinating woman. She spoke our language with perfect fluency, but with a slight French accent. Her figure was extremely tall and commanding, but a slight, elegant bend took from her height, and added to her interesting appearance; her eyes black, sparkling, soft, and animated;

Digitized by Google

her deportment that of a young queen, accustomed to *command* admiration, yet *winning* to preserve it." Her character was, however, liable to tumults of creole passion, and on the announcement that Napoleon was to be sent to St. Helena she flung herself into his cabin, made a scene, and then attempted to drown herself. The result, and even the attempt, had, fortunately, no element of tragedy. For while her body was half out of the cabin window, her husband restrained her from within, while Savary, with whom she had a feud, was shouting in fits of laughter: "Let her go! let her go!" Maitland had constant struggles with her while she was on board the *Bellerophon*, culminating in a scene when "the little self-possession that still remained gave way," and he called her "a very foolish woman," desiring her not to speak to him again. Nevertheless, when, a little later in the day, she left the ship, she came up to the captain "in a conciliatory and friendly manner that did her the highest honor," reminded him that he had called her a very foolish woman that morning, but asked him to shake hands, "as God knows," added the poor lady, "if we shall ever meet again." Maitland sums her up as a kind mother and affectionate wife, with many excellent qualities, "though perhaps a little warm." Forsyth says that she seems to have won the good-will and regard of all who knew her. One trait of humor is recorded of her. A child was born to her at St. Helena, whom she presented to the Emperor as the first French visitor that had entered Longwood without Lord Bathurst's permission. Mme. de Montholon records that she lived through their long and weary captivity in complete harmony with this seductive creature. After

Digitized by Google

Mme. de Montholon's departure she was left for two years without the society of a countrywoman, and she had to beg Lowe for the relief of a little company. No one made greater sacrifices in order to accompany Napoleon and her husband than Mme. Bertrand. She was fond of luxury and of society; she was accustomed to play a leading part in a splendid court; she had, indeed, at Trieste, held a vice-regal court of her own; her exquisitely beautiful children were approaching an age when their education would have to be her first object; but after the first paroxysm she went uncomplainingly to her tropical Siberia, and seems to have been a peace-maker in a community which, though small, afforded an unbounded field for that blessed calling.

Of the personality of M. and Mme. de Montholon we catch but a faint view, though their names are written large in the chronicles of the captivity. Montholon was of ancient family, and claimed, indeed, to be by inheritance an English or Irish peer. One of his ancestors, it is alleged, had saved the life of Richard Cœur de Lion, and had been created in consequence Earl of Lee and Baron O'Brien, titles which, it is alleged, were inherited by Montholon, but which diligent research fails to identify. However that may be, he had been known to Napoleon ever since he was a child of ten years old, when, being in Corsica with his mother and step-father, M. de Sémonville, he had received mathematical lessons from the young Napoleon, then a captain of artillery. Afterwards he was at school with Lucien and Jerôme, and with Eugène de Beauharnais. Hence he was, as may be supposed, closely identified with the career of Napoleon, and he was still further connected

Digitized by Google

with the imperial interest through the marriage of his sister with the pure and chivalrous Macdonald. It was the strange fate of Montholon to know Napoleon in the obscurity of his early days, to be associated with the magnificence of his empire, to follow him into exile, to watch by his death-bed with the tenderness of a son, to live to assist in the fantastic attempt on Boulogne, and so to be partaker of the third Napoleon's captivity for exactly the term of the captivity of the first. Six years of his life were spent in sharing the imprisonment of the first, and six years in sharing that of the third Napoleon. He lived to see the re-establishment of the empire, which Gourgaud missed by a few months; but Gourgaud, characteristically enough, was in opposition to the prince president.

Montholon was, happily, a blind devotee; happily, for a blind devotee was required in the little court. After the departure of Las Cases, therefore, it was not difficult for Montholon to succeed to the vacant place, for the conjugal devotion of Bertrand, and the moroseness of Gourgaud, disabled them from competition; and so Montholon became the most familiar and necessary of the Emperor's staff. But even he wished to go. Bathurst, in February, 1820, was writing caustically enough of Bertrand and Montholon: "They are both, in fact, upon the wing, but watching each other." Montholon, at any rate, wished to accompany his wife when she left in 1819, and had his daily struggles with Napoleon, who besought him to remain. Nine weeks, indeed, before the Emperor's death we find him discussing with Lowe who should succeed Bertrand and himself as attendants on the exile, and

Digitized by Google

Planat, as we have seen, was almost starting to replace him. Scott met him at Paris in 1826, and found him an "interesting person, by no means overmuch prepossessed in favor of his late master, whom he judged impartially, though with affection."

Of Albinie Hélène de Vassal, Mme. de Montholon, but for the insane jealousy of Gourgaud, we should know nothing, or next to nothing, though she left behind her some vivid notes of her exile. We learn incidentally from Méneval that her marriage with Montholon encountered some difficulties, for she had two divorced husbands living. The Emperor forbade the banns, but afterwards gave Montholon permission to marry "the niece of the President Séguier." Montholon had tricked his sovereign, for his bride was the forbidden lady under another description. "A quiet, unassuming woman," says Maitland, "who gave no trouble, and seemed perfectly satisfied, provided she were allowed to accompany her husband." She provided the music of the Emperor's drawing-room, singing Italian songs, with little voice, and strumming on the piano.

Emmanuel, Marquis of Las Cases, had had a somewhat checkered career. At an early age he entered the French navy and took part in the siege of Gibraltar. Before he was twenty-one he had passed as a lieutenant, and soon afterwards was placed in command of a brig. Then came the Revolution, and the young officer was one of the first to emigrate. This was ultimately fortunate, for his recollections of Coblentz and of the Emigration had always a particular savor for Napoleon. From Coblentz he was despatched on a secret mission to Gustavus III. of Sweden. Then Las Cases drifted to England,

Digitized by Google

formed a part of the disastrous expedition to Quiberon, and on his escape thence gave lessons in London, where he published a historical atlas, which proved remunerative. After the Eighteenth of Brumaire he returned to France, served under Bernadotte, and became a chamberlain and councillor of state. On Napoleon's first abdication he refused to adhere to the resolution of the council of state deposing the Emperor (although he accepted from Louis XVIII. a commission as captain in the French navy), and retired to England. During the Hundred Days he returned, of course, to Paris, and, after Waterloo, besought Napoleon to take him to St. Helena. Born three years before his master, Las Cases survived him twenty-one, dying in 1842.

We give these facts in detail, because they explain the preference which causes such jealousy. Las Cases belonged to the old nobility, he had served in the navy before the Revolution, he had been involved in the Emigration, he had seen much of England, and was thus able to satisfy Napoleon's insatiable curiosity on phases of life with which he had had no personal contact. Moreover, Las Cases was a man of the world. He had fought, gambled, and travelled, had seen life in the hundred-sided character of a needy and ingenious exile, and had observed the empire and its court from a much more independent situation than Napoleon's. Besides, he adored his master, had no secrets from him, regarded him as superhuman and divine. We have seen, indeed, that he had no scruples in the Emperor's service. "Napoleon is my God," he would say; or "I do not regret my exile, since it places me close to the noblest of created beings." He had even the complaisance to

Digitized by Google

be much shorter than the Emperor. There were, of course, drawbacks. He humiliated his master by being violently sea-sick on a British man-of-war, in spite of a new naval uniform and of the great bound in rank which he had achieved after a quarter of a century spent on shore. Then, too, his colleagues hated him. Their usual name for him was "The Jesuit." His favor with Napoleon, though perfectly explicable to us from his experience and his contrast with the too domestic Bertrand, the less cultured Montholon, and the impracticable Gourgaud, was a constant irritation to them. Then, again, his departure is not easily explained. He might have returned, but would not, imbedding himself in vapid phrases which even now we cannot exactly interpret, but which we translate into a conviction that his colleagues had rendered his life at Longwood impossible. In spite of all, in spite of his unblushing fabrications, his want of veracity, the irrepressible suspicion that he may, after all, have been only an enthusiastic Boswell seeking biographical material for publication, we confess to a sneaking kindness for the devoted, rhetorical little man; and we cannot forget that he insisted on handing over to Napoleon four thousand pounds, which was probably his entire fortune. With him was his son, then a boy, who afterwards assaulted Sir Hudson Lowe in the streets of London, and tried to bring about a duel with the ex-governor. Nineteen years after Napoleon's death the young man returned to St. Helena with the expedition to fetch back the Emperor's remains, and became a senator under Napoleon III.

Piontkowski remains a figure of mystery. He was a trooper in the Polish Lancers, who had followed

Digitized by Google

Napoleon to Elba, and had been given a commission in consequence of his fidelity. At a time when the British government would not allow Gourgaud to take with him his old servant, or Las Cases to be rejoined by his wife, they sent Piontkowski, unbidden and unwelcome, to join the Emperor. If we may trust the others, Gourgaud found him out at once to be untruthful, and to have made false statements about his campaigns. Napoleon knew nothing of him, disliked him, and, not unnaturally, distrusted him. After his departure, indeed, Napoleon openly suspected him of being a spy; Las Cases disdainfully mentions him as "the Pole." He vanished as suddenly as he came, nine months afterwards, with apparently plenty of money. We do not believe him to have been a spy, but his appearance and career at Longwood still require elucidation.

"The young ladies born in that island are extremely pretty," says a witness who lived at St. Helena during the Emperor's residence, and our various chronicles are full of them. There were the two Balcombes, Miss Wilks, Miss Robinson, who was known as "the Nymph," and Miss Kneips, who was known as "the Rosebud."

With Miss Wilks Gourgaud was desperately in love. "There is a woman!" he exclaims during their first acquaintance. He lost his heart at once, and asked himself, "Alas! Why am I a prisoner?" It was no comfort to him to be assured by Bertrand that he was preferred to the other suitors, or by Napoleon that he should be provided with a better marriage in France. He sees the ship that bears her away, and heaves a despairing "Adieu, Laure!"

All testimony is unanimous that Gourgaud in this

Digitized by Google

instance placed his affections well. "Miss Wilks was then in the first bloom of youth, and her whole demeanor, affability, and elegant, modest appearance conspired to render her the most charming and admirable young person I ever beheld, or have since met with, in all my peregrinations in Europe, Asia, and Africa for the space of thirty years." This is the high testimony of a lady who accompanied her on her first visit to Napoleon. The Emperor was scarcely less fascinated. He had long heard, he said, with a bow, of the elegance and beauty of Miss Wilks, but was now convinced that report had scarcely done her justice.

She was the daughter of Colonel Wilks, the East Indian governor of the island. She eventually married General Sir John Buchan, and lived to be ninety-one. She only died in 1888, and used to tell how Napoleon, at parting, had given her a bracelet, and, when she had said she was sorry to leave the island, had replied: "Ah! Mademoiselle, I only wish I could change places with you."

Napoleon gave fanciful names to people and to places. One quiet glen he had named the Valley of Silence, but, when he found that a pretty girl lived in it, he renamed it the Valley of the Nymph. The Nymph was a farmer's daughter, "a very pretty girl of about seventeen," named Marianne Robinson, whose sister had married a Captain Jordan of the Sixty-sixth Regiment, quartered at St. Helena. Warden devoted a page of his book to her, and states that the visits of Napoleon became so frequent to the little farm that the gossips of Jamestown warned the father, who afterwards forbade his daughter to appear when the Emperor called. This silly scan-

Digitized by Google

dal Napoleon thought it worth his while to contradict in the *Letters from the Cape*, stating that he only once spoke to her, in broken English, without alighting from his horse. Montchenu, however, who had an eminently prurient mind, repeats the statement, and avers that Napoleon made her a declaration, that he talked much of her beauty, and thus aroused the jealousy of Miss Balcombe. Napoleon did, no doubt, visit the Nymph more than once, and Gourgaud declares that she hinted to the Emperor that she was in the habit of taking early and solitary walks. But, so far from taking up the challenge, he rallies Gourgaud on having made a new conquest —an impeachment to which that gallant officer was always prepared to plead guilty. Finally the Nymph marries, and so puts an end to this vulgar gossip. Her husband is a merchant captain, a "M. Édouard" (Edwards), who has been attracted to her, according to the complacent belief of Longwood, by the reported admiration of the Emperor. "It is enough for me to have said that she is pretty," said the Emperor, "for this captain to fall in love with her and marry her." Napoleon also makes the mysterious comment that the marriage proves that the English have more decision than the French, a remark which appears to indicate some hesitating aspirations on the part of some member of the household, probably Captain Piontkowski. She brings the husband to Longwood, when Napoleon says that she has the air of a nun, and that her husband resembles Eugène Beauharnais. Napoleon, as is his wont, asks him some crude and tactless questions; the mariner blushes, the Emperor pledges him in a toast, and, after an hour and a half of this sort of

Digitized by Google

thing, the couple take their leave. After a while Napoleon follows them, and insists on embracing, not the Nymph, but her husband, on the ground, says Mr. Robinson, that he is so like Joseph Bonaparte—probably a mistake for Eugène. And so, with this unexpected exit, the Nymph vanishes into space.

Then there was another beauty, whom they called the "Rosebud." The editors of Gourgaud tell us that she was a Miss Kneips. She makes transient appearances, but we know nothing of her, or of some still more shadowy Miss Churchills, except that the large heart of Gourgaud found a nook for them all.

Miss Betsy Balcombe, however, is the girl whose name occurs most frequently in the St. Helena records. Twenty-three years after the Emperor's death, under her married name of Mrs. Abell, she published her recollections of his exile. Her father, Mr. Balcombe, was a sort of general purveyor, sometimes called by courtesy a banker; and the traditions of the island declared him to be a son of George IV. Napoleon lived at this gentleman's villa, while Longwood was being prepared for his reception, and there made acquaintance with his two daughters. Betsy was about fifteen, and the younger of the two. They both talked French, but Betsy was the prettier, and the favorite, for she represented a type which was new to the Emperor, a high-spirited hoyden, who said and did whatever occurred to her on the spur of the moment. The pranks that she played she records in her book; they must certainly have been in the nature of a piquant novelty to Napoleon. She boxed his ears, she attacked him with his own sword. But the suite were not unnaturally disgust-

Digitized by Google

ed at the familiarity with which she treated their master, and Napoleon himself wearied of her, denounced the whole family as *canaille* and as *misérables.* One flirtation kept the whole island alive—would Major Ferzen marry Betsy or not? Napoleon said, No, the major would not so degrade himself. Still, at rare intervals, she amused him to the last. The Emperor, a few weeks before she left, sent the sisters two plates of bonbons. Lowe ordered them to be returned. And, with this last characteristic memory of St. Helena and its ruler, the Balcombe family sailed from the island on the same ship with Gourgaud.

But though the mosquitoes were harassing, the dominant population of St. Helena was the rats; more formidable than regiments, or cannon, or Lowe. On this subject there is an almost hysterical unanimity. "The rats," says O'Meara, "are in numbers almost incredible at Longwood. I have frequently seen them assemble like broods of chickens round the offal thrown out of the kitchen. The floors and wooden partitions that separated the rooms were perforated with holes in every direction. . . . It is difficult for any person, who has not actually heard it, to form an idea of the noise caused by these animals running up and down between the partitions and galloping in flocks in the garrets." Frequently O'Meara has to defend himself against them with his boots and his bootjack. They run round the table while the Emperor is at dinner without taking heed of any one. As Napoleon takes his hat from the sideboard, a large rat springs out of it and runs between his legs. The curse of the isle, says Sturmer, is the rats; the curse of locusts was

Digitized by Google

not to be mentioned beside it. The inhabitants are powerless against them. A slave sleeping in a passage had part of his leg eaten off by them. So had one of the Emperor's horses. Bertrand, while asleep, was bitten seriously in the hand. The children had to be protected from them at night. Trifling, and indeed diverting, as this pest seemed to the distant Bathurst, it must have been an odious addition to the petty miseries of Longwood. Nor was Bathurst alone in his merriment. Among the squalid caricatures with which the French press attempted to besmirch the memory of their fallen sovereign there are several devoted to this topic. Napoleon received by the population of St. Helena —the rats; Napoleon granting a constitution to the rats; Napoleon sleeping at peace because guarded by a cat-sentry; and so forth. One need not dilate on these pleasantries.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

THE COMMISSIONERS

IN this dreary drama, as in most human transactions, the element of comedy is not absent, nor even the salt of farce. The comedy is supplied by Sir Hudson Lowe, his beans, and his counters. The farce is the career of the commissioners.

By the treaty of August 2, 1815, it was provided, at the instance of Castlereagh, which he afterwards regretted, that Austria, Prussia, and Russia were "to appoint commissioners to proceed to and abide at the place which the government of His Britannic Majesty shall have assigned for the residence of Napoleon Buonaparte, and who, without being responsible for his custody, will assure themselves of his presence." And by the next article His Most Christian Majesty of France was to be invited by the signatory courts to send a similar functionary. Prussia, combining a judicious foresight with a wise economy, declined to avail herself of this privilege. But the other courts hastened to nominate their representatives. These had, it will be observed, one sole and single duty, "to assure themselves of his presence." It is sufficient to observe that none of them ever once saw him face to face, except one who beheld his corpse.

The Russian once from the race-course thought he saw him standing on the steps of his house. On the

Digitized by Google

same occasion the Austrian, concealed in a trench, perceived through a telescope a man in a three-cornered hat, whom he judged to be the Emperor. The Frenchman had the same telescopic glimpse, but, remaining till Napoleon's death, was privileged to see his remains. That is the whole record of their mission, "to assure themselves of his presence."

They had, therefore, a large balance of time to spend in interviewing and abusing the governor, to whom they were a torment, as implying a rival authority, and who treated them accordingly. He characteristically assured the Austrian that he had searched through Puffendorf, Vattel, and Grotius in vain to find a parallel to their position, or, he might have added, to his own. But this in no degree comforted those who wanted to see Napoleon, if only for a moment, and to whom that satisfaction was denied. They prowled round Longwood in vain, the Emperor maliciously observing them from behind his Venetian blinds, and sometimes sending out his suite to pick up news from them. But this again was by no means what the commissioners came for.

Once, indeed, Napoleon asked them, as private individuals, to luncheon; for he did not doubt that their curiosity would prevail over their etiquette and the constraint of the governor. The meal, indeed, would not have been a pleasant one, as he spent all the morning in preparing an elaborate appeal to them. But they never came. He waited till five o'clock, when an orderly brought a cavalier refusal from the Russian and the Austrian on the ground of *les convenances*. Montchenu sent no reply, though this must have been the occasion on which he is supposed to have sent the heroic reply: "Tell your master that

Digitized by Google

I am here to guard him, and not to dine with him." On no other occasion was the option open to Montchenu or the commissioners. It was their last and only chance.

Montchenu, the French commissioner, took himself the most seriously, and, therefore, in this absurd commission, was by much the most absurd. His appointment is said to have been the revenge of Talleyrand for all that he had endured at the hands of Napoleon. "It is my only revenge, but it is terrible," he said. "What torture for a man like Napoleon to be obliged to live with an ignorant and pedantic chatterbox. I know him; he cannot endure such a boredom; he will become ill, and die as before a slow fire." As we have seen, however, this subtle vengeance failed in its object, for Montchenu never once succeeded in inflicting himself on the captive. In early life he had known the Emperor, when Napoleon was a subaltern at Valence in a regiment of which Montchenu was lieutenant-colonel, and when both were rivals for the affections of Mlle. de Saint Germain, who, however, preferred M. de Montalivet, whom she married, to either. He seems to have retained this amorous complexion at St. Helena, and his conversation, as reported by Gourgaud, appears to consist entirely of indecorous observations and immoral advice. He endeavored to "embrace Mrs. Martin," whoever she may have been. He sent Lady Lowe a declaration of love in eight pages, which Lady Lowe offered to show Gourgaud. His fatuity was only equalled by his vanity. He boasted at large about his success with English ladies. Some four thousand he has known; he intimates that "they were not cruel." Montchenu appeared to have pleas-

Digitized by Google

ant recollections of Valence; he questioned Gourgaud as to the later loves of Napoleon; he showed the Emperor little attentions, sent him newspapers, and the like. Napoleon's memories of Montchenu do not seem to have been so favorable. "I know this Montchenu," he says. "He is an old fool, a chatterbox, a carriage general who has never smelt powder. I will not see him." The worst of this description, says the Russian commissioner, is that it is accurate. Again, "Poor fool, poor old fool, old booby," Napoleon calls him. And again, "He is one of those men who support the ancient prejudice that Frenchmen are born mountebanks." Later on the Emperor threatens to kick the old marquis out of doors should he appear at Longwood, not because he is the French commissioner, but because of some papers that he has signed. He is an object of ridicule to all. He had been the laughing-stock of Paris. One eminent compatriot described him as *bavard insupportable, complètement nul*. Even Lowe cuts jokes at him. From his willingness to accept, and his reluctance to extend hospitality, he was known as M. de Monterchez-nous. Henry, who attended him medically, had however, the laugh against himself. He had reckoned up a long tale of fees: the marquis rewarded him with an obliging note. This nobleman was now past sixty. He had been a page of Louis XV. Having entered the army before the Revolution, and followed the princes into exile, he made at the restoration the same astonishing bound in military promotion that Las Cases had accomplished in the naval service. In December, 1815, he was nominated as French commissioner at St. Helena, an appointment which had the negative advantage of securing him

Digitized by Google

from his creditors. His positive duties "were to assure himself habitually by his own eyes of the existence of Bonaparte." His own eyes, as we have seen, never enabled him to do more than assure himself of the end of that existence. Nevertheless, he set off in a serious and indeed heroic spirit. He began his despatches from Teneriffe on the voyage out. "I have the honor to warn you," he says to his chief, "that I am quite decided never to separate myself from my prisoner so long as he lives." He arrives on the anniversary of Waterloo, lands precipitately, and demands at once to be conducted to Longwood, that he may send his government a certificate of the existence of Napoleon by the ship leaving next day. He is with difficulty appeased, but tells Lowe that it is essential that he should be in a position to say that he has seen the captive. Two days afterwards (June 20th) the governor asks Count Bertrand if the Emperor will receive the commissioners. "Have they brought any letters for the Emperor from their sovereigns?" asks Bertrand. "No; they have come under the convention of August 2, 1815, to assure themselves of his presence." Bertrand will take the Emperor's orders. Have they got the convention? There is a terrible doubt. No one had thought of bringing a copy: no copy can be found; and yet it is from this instrument that they derive their authority and their official existence. The commissioners are at their wits' end. At last, by a freak of fortune, after a search of three weeks, Sturmer finds in his trunk some loose sheets of the *Journal des Debats*, which he had brought in due course of packing, and which happened to contain the precious treaty. In this undignified form it was forwarded to Napoleon, who

Digitized by Google

answers through Montholon on August 23d by a protest against it. Lowe communicates to the commissioners an extract from this letter, which amounted to a refusal to see them officially. In the mean time, says Lowe, "they are sick with their desire of seeing him." Soon they become mad with the same desire. Montchenu wants to break into the house with a company of grenadiers. He is reminded that Napoleon has sworn to shoot the first man who enters his room without his leave. In the mean time he attempts the entry alone, and is repulsed by a sergeant. Eventually he has to subside into an attitude of watchfulness in ambush for the subordinate members of the French colony, in hopes of inveigling them to meals, and ultimately to gossip. In this last effort he to some extent succeeded, and he became on such terms with Gourgaud as to bid him a tender farewell, strictly enjoining him to make known to whom it might concern the terrible dreariness of life at St. Helena, and the consequent necessity that the commissioner's salary should be not less than four thousand pounds a year.

Montchenu was distinguished from the other commissioners by the possession of a secretary, a distinction which was not altogether an advantage. We have an impression that the secretary, M. de Gors, was intrusted with the duty of supervising his chief. At any rate, he reported upon him with startling candor. After, we presume, copying Montchenu's despatches, de Gors accompanies them with a scathing commentary. "I am sorry to have to say it, on account of M. de Montchenu, but I am bound to declare that his criticisms on his colleagues are unfounded, and are too much colored by his own

Digitized by Google

personality. He should have been more just to M. de Balmain, the only one who has really taken to heart the common interests of the commission, to which by excess of zeal he has sacrificed his health and repose. M. de Montchenu should not have forgotten that it is to Balmain that the mission owes any degree of interest that it possesses. But he has never been able to make up his mind to join Balmain in a simple visit to the inhabitants of Longwood. He has chattered a good deal, always blamed what he did not do himself, and has himself never done anything when the opportunity offered. He has occupied himself with disputes of precedence; and things have now taken such a turn that the post of Longwood will not be captured without a thousand difficulties."

It is unnecessary to add anything to the description of Montchenu by Montchenu's secretary. We may pass to the commissioner who, in the secretary's opinion, shone so much in comparison with his own chief.

The Count of Balmain, the Russian commissioner, was one of the Ramsays of Balmain, or, rather, of a branch settled in Russia for a century and a quarter. He began inauspiciously by proposing to bring a young Parisian seamstress with him in an unofficial capacity, but this scandal appears to have been averted by the horror of the other commissioners. Not that such a proceeding would have conspicuously jarred with the morals of St. Helena, for, if we may credit our French chroniclers, the naval chiefs there lived with mistresses; and the loves of Gourgaud himself, if we may judge from his innuendoes, were neither limited nor refined.

Digitized by Google

Balmain seems to have been the commissioner of the coolest judgment and most agreeable manner; and Longwood, so to speak, set its cap at him, but without much success. Balmain, says Sturmer, has acquired general esteem. He is extremely modest, and extremely prudent, avoiding carefully anything that could give umbrage to the governor. He is, besides, accomplished, and writes well. Obliging, amiable, and unpretentious, he is beloved by all who know him. He is thus a striking contrast with M. de Montchenu, for whom he has a scarcely veiled contempt. His instructions were not identical with those of his colleagues, for he was thus enjoined: "Dans vos relations avec Bonaparte, vous garderez les ménagements et la mesure qu'exige une situation aussi délicate, *et les égards personnels qu'on lui doit!*"—a sentence which is neither found nor implied in the instructions of the others. But what was infinitely more effective than the sentence was the fact that the italics represent a line drawn under those words by the Emperor Alexander himself. So grave an emphasis was not lost on Balmain, who declared that his Emperor desired him to use a courtesy and reserve in regard to Napoleon which compelled him to dissociate himself from some of Montchenu's more startling proceedings. But the underscoring by the Emperor does not seem to have long guided the policy of the Russian government, for it presented to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle a memorial which might have been written by Bathurst himself and which embodied the undying rancor of Pozzo di Borgo. It demanded rigorous treatment of Napoleon; more especially that he should be compelled to show himself twice a day,

Digitized by Google

by force if necessary, to the commissioners and the governor. But all the thunders and all the menaces of all the powers of Europe failed to exact this simple condition. Napoleon never showed himself, and remained master of the field.

Balmain commenced his career at St. Helena by falling in love with Miss Bruck (or Brook), by whom he was refused: he ended it by marrying Miss Johnson, the step-daughter of Sir Hudson, who seems afterwards to have amused the court of St. Petersburg by her eccentricities and her accent. This courtship, which was carried on during his last two years at St. Helena, complicated his relations with the governor, for it hampered him in the expression of his opinions, though it did not prevent constant conflicts with that official. But it makes his testimony as to Lowe all the more valuable and impartial.

With all his circumspection, however, Balmain does not escape the mist of unveracity that befogged St. Helena. On November 2, 1817, Montholon records that the Emperor sends Gourgaud to pump (if so expressive a vulgarism be permitted) the commissioners, who have, he knows, received despatches from their governments. Gourgaud returns, according to Montholon's narrative, bringing an immaterial falsehood, supposed to come from Sturmer, and the statement from Balmain that his Emperor has charged him with certain communications for Napoleon. Gourgaud's record, it should be noted, in no respect confirms this. Montholon continues by narrating that for two days afterwards there are constant communications with the Russian. A paper of explanation is dictated by the Emperor. On December 17th Montholon states that Napoleon is de-

Digitized by Google

termined to send Gourgaud to Europe, for he is possessed by recollections of Tilsit and Erfurt, and is, therefore, anxious to make overtures to the Emperor Alexander, "though there is nothing in the communications of Balmain to warrant these hopes." On January 11, 1818, he has this entry: "An important communication from Count Balmain is transmitted through General Gourgaud. Dreams of a return to Europe, and of princely hospitality in Russia." We turn to Gourgaud, and find that on that day he tried, as the Emperor desired, to meet Balmain, but failed to do so. Neither there nor elsewhere does he hint at any communication such as is described by Montholon. In vain, too, we search Balmain's despatches, which are, indeed, in a very different vein. What this communication, conveyed from some one through some one, neither of whom knew anything about it, purported to be, we also learn from Montholon. On February 10, 1818, he has a vague entry about hopes from the fraternal friendship of Alexander, and as to the acceptability of Gourgaud at the Russian court. Under these influences Napoleon dictates an elaborate reply to the mysterious message, which had never been sent or received. In this paper he thanks the Emperor Alexander, as a brother, for the assurance received from him through Balmain, and for the hospitality offered by him in Russia, proceeds to answer three questions which the Emperor Alexander had ordered Balmain to put, as to the occupation of the duchy of Oldenburg in 1812, as to the war with Russia, and as to the failure in the negotiations for a Russian marriage: and concludes by offering the Emperor Alexander his alliance should that sovereign throw over the Bourbons,

Digitized by Google

and by declaring himself even willing to conclude a treaty of commerce with Britain should that be the necessary condition of a good understanding. This paper was doubtless given to Gourgaud for his guidance; and it was, in all probability, substantially the same document as that which Bertrand attempted to hand to Balmain two months afterwards, and which Balmain declined to receive.

What is the meaning of it all? It is clear that there was no communication from Balmain to Napoleon. Putting aside the improbability of it, and the absolute silence of Balmain, the reputed author, as well as of Gourgaud, the reputed channel, the Emperor Alexander was at that time in no mood for inviting Napoleon to Russia, or asking him retrospective historical questions. On the contrary, this was the year of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, where the Russian government demanded more stringent custody for Napoleon. We may dismiss with absolute confidence the story of the communication. But why, then, did Napoleon found a state paper on a message which he never received, and answer questions that were never asked? The explanation would appear to be this. Montholon tells us, two months before Gourgaud's departure, that the Emperor is determined to send Gourgaud to Europe to appeal to the Emperor Alexander. It seems to us, then, that in view of Gourgaud's departure, he wished to give this officer a paper, a kind of credential which could be shown; that he had faint hopes of winning the sympathy of the Russian Emperor, partly from the recollection of the ascendancy that he had once exercised over Alexander, partly because he was no doubt aware that Balmain's instructions had a shade

Digitized by Google

of favor in them, partly because he must have been aware that Alexander had no love for the Bourbons, and that circumstances might make it necessary to make new arrangements for filling their unstable throne; that he, therefore, desired especially to clear himself on the points which had alienated Alexander from him; that the supposititious message from Alexander furnished a ground on which to base his explanations; that many who saw the paper would not know that this ground was fictitious; and that if the document, or its purport, ever reached Alexander, the message and the questions could be explained away as misunderstood conversation. It is even possible, though by no means probable, that Balmain may have asked such questions of the suite out of pure curiosity. At any rate, if the paper ever reached Alexander at all, matters would have gone so far that this flaw would seem insignificant. Strange were the workings of that astute and unscrupulous mind: we do not profess to follow them: we can only ascertain the facts, and speculate. For one thing, Napoleon, in those days, never liked to neglect a chance, even if it seemed remote. And the interests of his son, which were ever before him, must be kept in mind. It might some day be useful for the dynasty that an attempt should be made to clear away the misunderstanding with Russia. Meanwhile Balmain, innocent and honorable gentleman as he appeared to have been, and as the tone of his despatches indicates, was going on his blameless way, unconscious of these wiles, and resolute, as would appear, only on one course—that of keeping Longwood and its intrigues at arm's length.

On Balmain's departure, Montchenu (aware per-

Digitized by Google

haps of his secretary's preference for the Russian) summed up his character with vindictive severity. "You have no idea," he writes, "of M. de Balmain's extravagances, of his ineptitude, of his weakness and eccentricity." And he proceeds to compare himself with his colleague. Often did Sir Hudson say to the other commissioners, "Ah, gentlemen, why do you not behave like the marquis?"—at least so the marquis complacently records.

Bartholomew, Baron Sturmer, was the Austrian commissioner. He was only twenty-eight when he reached St. Helena, and he had not long been married to a pretty and agreeable Frenchwoman, who kept Las Cases, to his extreme indignation, at a distance, although he claimed that she had received the greatest kindnesses in Paris from Mme. de Las Cases and himself. His position was the most difficult of all, for his government constantly enjoined him to work harmoniously with Lowe, which was in effect impossible.

Napoleon tried to open relations with the representative of his father-in-law. He once sent to ask if, in case of grave illness, he might intrust Sturmer with a message to the Austrian Emperor which should reach that monarch, and no one else. Sturmer could only reply, helplessly, that he would ask his government for instructions, which, of course, never arrived.

Sturmer was withdrawn in 1818, on the suggestion of the British government, made at the instance of Lowe. To Montchenu was awarded the cumulative sinecure of representing Austria as well as France. The marquis saw his opportunity. He at once demanded of his government a commission as lieu-

Digitized by Google

tenant-general, a high decoration, and five hundred pounds a year increase of salary from them, as well as a salary of twelve hundred pounds a year from the Austrian government. How these modest requests were received history may guess, but does not record.

Whether from the diversity of their instructions, or the malignity of the climate, or the humors of their courts, the commissioners could scarcely be called a harmonious body. On only three points did they show any agreement. One was contempt for Sir Hudson Lowe, on which they were bitterly unanimous. Another was the dearness of St. Helena, and the consequent inadequacy of their salaries, on which they concurred to the pitch of enthusiasm. The third was the effect of their stay on their nerves. "Far from acclimatizing myself to this horrible rock," writes Balmain, "I suffer constantly from my nerves; my health is already ruined by the climate." Three months later fresh nerve attacks drive him to Brazil. But this is as nothing to the nerves of Sturmer. Sturmer for six or eight months before he left was seized with a sort of hysteria. He wept without knowing why, and laughed without knowing why. At last his nervous attacks became so violent that he had to be held by four men when the fit seized him, and could only be calmed by opium. The climate, or Lowe, or both, were too much for the systems of these unlucky diplomatists.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII

THE EMPEROR AT HOME

NO picture of St. Helena at this time can be complete without at least a sketch of the central figure—all the more as it is the last of the many portraits of Napoleon that we can obtain. Of his physical appearance from the time of his passing into British hands there are various accounts, too long and minute to be inserted here. These, therefore, or the most graphic of them, we relegate to an appendix.

As to his habitation, Longwood itself was a collection of huts which had been constructed as a cattle-shed. It was swept by an eternal wind; it was shadeless, and it was damp. Lowe himself can say no good of it, and may have felt the strange play of fortune by which he was allotted the one delightful residence on the island with twelve thousand a year, while Napoleon was living in an old cow-house on eight.

The lord of so many palaces, who had slept as a conqueror in so many palaces not his own, was now confined to two small rooms of equal size—about fourteen feet by twelve, and ten or eleven high. To this little measure had shrunk all his conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils. Each of these rooms was lit by two small windows looking towards the regimental

Digitized by Google

camp. In one corner was the little camp-bed, with green silk curtains, which the Emperor had used at Marengo and Austerlitz. To hide the back door there was a screen, and between this screen and the fireplace an old sofa, on which Napoleon passed most of his day, though it was so covered with books that there was scarcely space for comfort. The walls were covered with brown nankeen, and amid the general squalor a magnificent wash-hand-stand with silver ewers and basins displayed an incongenial splendor. But the ornaments of the room were other than this; they were the salvage of the wreck of his family and his empire. There was, of course, a portrait (by Isabey) of Marie Louise, then living in careless beatitude with Neipperg at Parma. There were the portraits of the King of Rome, riding a lamb, and putting on a slipper, both by Thibault; there was also a bust of the child. There was a miniature of Josephine. There hung also the alarm-clock of Frederick the Great taken from Potsdam, and the watch of the First Consul when in Italy, suspended by a chain of the plaited hair of Marie Louise.

In the second room there were a writing table, some book-shelves, and another bed, on which the Emperor would rest in the day-time, or to which he would change from the other, when he was, as was generally the case, restless and sleepless at night.

O'Meara gives a graphic picture of Napoleon in his bedroom. He sat on the sofa, which was covered with a long white cloth. On this "reclined Napoleon, clothed in his white morning gown, white loose trousers and stockings, all in one, a checkered red madras (handkerchief) upon his head, and his shirt collar open, without cravat. His air was melancholy

Digitized by Google

and troubled. Before him stood a little round table with some books, at the foot of which lay in confusion upon the carpet a heap of those he had already perused."

His usual costume was, however, more formal than this. He wore a hunting uniform, a green coat with sporting buttons, and, when the cloth grew shabby, had it turned rather than wear English cloth. With these he wore white kerseymere breeches and stockings. He gave up wearing his uniform of the Chasseurs of the Guard six weeks after he arrived in the island. He retained, however, the famous little cocked hat, but the tricolored cockade he laid aside with some ceremony two years after Waterloo, telling his valet to keep it as a relic, or in view of better days. These details are not wholly vapid, because he had method and meaning even in such trifles. Moreover, if we would picture to ourselves Napoleon in his final phase, we must know them.

What was his manner of life?

He breakfasted alone at eleven, dressed for the day about two, and dined, at first, at seven, though he afterwards changed the hour to four. Just before Gourgaud left there was a new arrangement; the mid-day breakfast was abolished; there was dinner at three, and supper at ten; then, a few days afterwards, dinner is to be at two—changes suspected by Gourgaud as intended to suit the health and convenience of Mme. de Montholon, but which were probably devised to beguile the long weariness of the day, or to cheat the long wakefulness of the night. For he practically passed all his days in his hut, reading, writing, talking, but withal bored to death.

The world saw nothing of this shabby interior:

Digitized by Google

what it did see was totally different, for Napoleon kept up, as part of his contention about title, the utmost state consistent with his position. He drove out with six horses to his carriage, and an equerry in full uniform riding at each door. But the six horses, sometimes a source of danger from the sharpness of the turns and the pace at which he chose to be driven, were not a mere luxury. The roads at St. Helena were such that the ladies of his party, when they went out to dinner, or to a ball, had to be conveyed in a Merovingian equipage drawn by several yoke of oxen.

The etiquette was not less severe indoors. Gourgaud and Bertrand and Montholon were kept standing for hours, till they nearly dropped from fatigue. On one occasion Napoleon is annoyed by an irrepressible yawn from Bertrand. The grand marshal excuses himself by stating that he has been standing more than three hours. Gourgaud, pale and almost ill with fatigue, would lean against the door. Antommarchi, who, by-the-bye, had to put on a court dress when he visited his patient, had to stand in his presence till he nearly fainted. On the other hand, if one of them was seated by the Emperor and rose when Mme. Bertrand or Mme. de Montholon entered the room, he was rebuked. The Emperor had always been keenly alive to this ritual. He discourses on it diffusely to Las Cases. He noticed at once in the Hundred Days the advance of democracy when one of his ministers rose to leave him without permission. Even in the agony of Rochefort he observed a small breach of etiquette of the same kind. Indeed, when Gourgaud mentions to him that in China the sovereign is worshipped as a god, he gravely replies that that is

Digitized by Google

as it should be. At St. Helena the small court that remained was chivalrously sedulous to observe the strictest forms to their dethroned Emperor. None of them came to his room without being summoned. If they had something of importance to communicate, they asked for an audience. None uninvited joined him in a walk, and all in his presence remained bareheaded, until he became aware that the English were ordered to remain covered in speaking to him, when he desired his followers to do the same. None spoke to him first, unless when conversation was in flow. But Bertrand once or twice contradicted his master so abruptly that the Emperor at once remarked it, and observed that he would not have dared to behave so at the Tuileries. Bertrand, too, incurred the imperial displeasure by not dining as grand marshal regularly at the imperial table, for sometimes his wife wished him to dine with her. Anything of this kind that savored of shortcoming and neglect seriously annoyed Napoleon. Little things that might have escaped his notice in the bustle of Paris weighed on him at St. Helena; they brought home to him, too, the change in his position. Then there was the question of the title. But Bertrand, though he might sometimes flag in observance, always sent out the letters on behalf of his master sealed with the seal and styled with the pomp of the grand marshal of the palace and of the Emperor, though there was little at St. Helena to recall either the one or the other. At dinner Napoleon was served with great state, on gold and silver plate, and waited on by his French servants in a rich livery of green and gold. Twelve English sailors, chosen from the squadron, were at first allotted to him, and dressed in the same costume.

Digitized by Google

but they disappeared with the *Northumberland*, to which ship they belonged; and Napoleon declined Lowe's offer to replace them with soldiers. A vacant place was reserved next him for the Empress, but this was sometimes given to some favored lady. There was a vast variety of dishes, of which the Emperor ate heartily; on an honored guest he would press particular dainties. As always, his dinner occupied but a short time. At the Tuileries it was an affair of twenty minutes; at St. Helena five minutes more was allowed to enable Bertrand to have his fill of bonbons. And in the earlier days at Longwood he would send at dessert for some volume of French tragedy, which he would read aloud.

To many this petty pomp may seem absurd, but with the suite we cannot help feeling a melancholy sympathy, as we see these gallant gentlemen determined to prove that, whatever Napoleon might be to others, to them he was always their sovereign.

And we must here notice the strange composition of the party. Montholon, as we are informed by his biographer, was hereditary grand huntsman of France under the old dynasty—a post to which Louis XVIII. offered to restore him on the first Restoration. Las Cases was a Royalist emigrant. Gourgaud was the foster-brother of the Duc de Berry, and was one of Louis XVIII.'s guard during the first Restoration. Of the four, Bertrand was the only one who could be described as free from all connection with royalism.

The one pleasure of the captive's life was an arrival of books. Then he would shut himself up with them for days together—bathing in them, revelling in them, feasting on them. But, indeed, he was always in-

Digitized by Google

clined to remain in the house. He hated the signs of prison, the sentries, the orderly officer, the chance of meeting Lowe. By remaining at home, he tells Gourgaud, he preserves his dignity; there he is always Emperor, and that is the only way in which he can live. So he tries to obtain exercise indoors. Lowe reports on one occasion that the Emperor had constructed a sort of hobby-horse made of cross-beams. He sat at one end of the beam, with a heavy weight at the other, and played a sort of see-saw. But these specifics would fail, and in his deprivation of exercise he would become ill, he would be touched with scurvy, his legs would swell, and he would derive a morbid satisfaction from the reflection that he was suffering from the governor's restrictions. Then, in the last year of his life, he determined to live again. He rode a little, but his main interest was in his garden. Surrounded by a gang of Chinese laborers, he would plan and swelter and dig; for to dig he was not ashamed. A great painter, says Montholon, would have found a worthy subject in the mighty conqueror wearing red slippers and a vast straw hat, with his spade in his hand, working away at dawn, directing the exertions of his impressed household, and, what Montholon confesses were more efficacious, the labors of the Chinese gardeners. Paul Delaroche painted a portrait of him in this costume, resting from his labors with a somewhat flabby expression of countenance. So strenuously did he move earth to make a shelter that Lowe became alarmed. He feared that his sentinels might find their supervision limited; he gave a solemn warning that the work should not proceed. He took credit to himself that he did not demolish it. Little or no heed

Digitized by Google

seems to have been taken of this futile fussiness, for Lowe was now practically ignored. Napoleon threw himself into the operations with his usual ardor; spent much time and money on them; bought large trees and moved them, with the aid of the artillery regiment and some hundreds of Chinese. All this distracted him for a time, and gave him exercise.

His unlucky suite had to delve, whether they liked or not. But this was, perhaps, a not unwelcome change of labor. For indoors their work was hard. Napoleon hated writing, and had almost lost the art, for what he did write was illegible. It is recorded that on his marriage he, with incredible difficulty, mânaged to write a short note to his father-in-law. With infinite pains his secretaries contrived to make it presentable. He could only dictate; and he dictated with a vengeance. On one occasion at Longwood he is stated to have dictated for fourteen hours at a stretch, with only short intervals from time to time to read over what had been written. Shorthand was unknown to his household, so the operation was severe; though Las Cases did invent for himself some sort of hieroglyphic system. Moreover, he sometimes dictated all night. Gourgaud would be sent for at four in the morning to take the place of the exhausted Montholon. He would cheer his secretaries by telling them that they should have the copyright of what they wrote, which would bring them in vast sums. But this illusion did not quench their groans, and, indeed, in bitterer moments he told them that if they were under the impression that their work belonged to them, they made a great mistake. What was the result of all this dictation we do not know—some of it probably is yet unpub-

Digitized by Google

lished. But there is a great bulk in print, and some material may have been utilized in other ways, as in the *Letters from the Cape*. Gourgaud, indeed, suspected the Emperor of several compositions—of the *Manuscrit de Ste. Hélène*, for example, which he certainly did not write, and of an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, which was composed by Allen at Holland House, from information supplied by Cardinal Fesch and Louis Bonaparte. It is probable that there was a good deal of dictated inspiration constantly proceeding from St. Helena to Europe; and Gourgaud blames the Emperor for producing so many pamphlets. Some of these manuscripts were buried in a corner of the garden, and did not, apparently, see the light.

Besides gardening, riding, reading, and dictation. he had few distractions. At one time he took to buying lambs and making pets of them, but this innocent whim soon passed. Polo was played on the island, but not by him. Sport, strictly so called, was difficult and indifferent. Gourgaud, who was indefatigable, would sometimes shoot turtle-doves, sometimes a pheasant or a partridge, and sometimes a sow. Sir Hudson Lowe turned out some rabbits for Napoleon to shoot, but, with his unlucky inopportuneness, chose the moment when the Emperor had been planting some young trees. However, the rats killed the rabbits, and so saved the trees; at any rate, the rabbits disappeared. Napoleon only began to shoot in his last days, and then performed feats which would make a sportsman weep. It had always been so. At Malmaison in old days he had kept a gun in his room and fired at Josephine's tame birds. And now he began, during his

Digitized by Google

gardening enthusiasm, in defence of his enclosure, by shooting Mme. Bertrand's pet kids, to her infinite distress, and any other vagrant animals that strayed within his boundary. Finding a bullock there, he slew that beast also. Then he sent for some goats and shot them. This shooting, it need scarcely be said, caused uneasiness to the governor, and to Montchenu, his colleague, as well as a remote pang to Forsyth, his biographer. What would happen, asked Lowe, if Napoleon killed some one by mistake? Could Napoleon be tried and punished for manslaughter? Such was the perturbation that these questions were actually submitted to the law officers of the crown.

At first he rode, but the close attendance of an English officer was intolerable, and for four years he did not get on a horse. During this long repose he said comically of his horse that if ever there were a canon, it was he, for he lived well and never worked. He had never been nervous on horseback, he said, for he had never learned to ride. It may interest some to know that he considered the finest and best horse that ever he owned to be, not the famous Marengo, but one named Mourad Bey.

He played at some games—billiards, in a careless fashion; *reversi*, which he had been used to play as a child; and chess. At chess he was eminently unskilful, and it taxed all the courtliness of his suite to avoid defeating him, a simple trickery which he sometimes perceived. On the *Northumberland* he had played *vingt-et-un*, but prohibited it when he found that it produced gambling. At all games he liked to cheat, flagrantly and undisguisedly, as a joke; but refused, of course, to take the money thus won, say-

Digitized by Google

ing, with a laugh, "What simpletons you are! It is thus that young fellows of good family are ruined."

It was apparently a solace to him to read aloud, though he did not read remarkably well, and had no ear for the cadences of poetry. But one of the difficulties of those who like reading aloud is to find an appreciative audience, and so it was in the present case. Montholon tells us of one, at least, who slumbered (we suspect Gourgaud at once), a circumstance which the Emperor did not forget. On another occasion Gourgaud remarks of a French play: "The *Awakened Sleeper* sends us to sleep." When the Emperor reads aloud his own memoirs the same genial companion criticises them with such severity that Napoleon declines to read them aloud any more. At one reading, however, (of *Paul and Virginia*), Gourgaud weeps outright, while Mme. de Montholon complains that recitals so harrowing disturb digestion.

He was supposed to declaim like Talma, and prolonged declamation of French tragedy in a warm climate may sometimes invite repose. Tragedy was his favorite reading, and Corneille his favorite author in that department of literature. There is on record a discourse on Corneille's tragedies, pronounced by the Emperor in the hazardous salons of the Kremlin. "Above all, I love tragedy," he said, "sublime and lofty, as Corneille wrote it. His great men are more true to life than those in history, for one only sees them in the real crises, in the supreme moments; and one is not overloaded with the preparatory labor of detail and conjecture which historians, often erroneously, supply. So much the

Digitized by Google

better for human glory, for there is much that is unworthy which should be omitted, much of doubt and vacillation: and all this should disappear in the representation of the hero. We should see him as a statue, in which the weakness and tremors of the flesh are no longer perceptible." Next to Corneille he seems to have loved Racine. But he was catholic in his tastes, and would readily turn to Beaumarchais and the *Arabian Nights*, though these may have been concessions to the frailty of his audience. Like Pitt, his great adversary, he relished *Gil Blas*, but thought it a bad book for the young, as "Gil Blas sees only the dark side of human nature, and the youthful think that that is a true picture of the world, which it is not." He frequently read the Bible; sometimes, in translations, Homer and Virgil, Æschylus, or Euripides. From English literature he would take *Paradise Lost*, Hume's *History of England*, and *Clarissa Harlowe*. With Ossian, to whatever literature that poet may belong, he would commune as with an old friend. For Voltaire's *Zaire* he had a positive passion. He had once asked Mme. de Montholon to choose a tragedy for the evening's entertainment: she had chosen *Zaire* and thereafter they had *Zaire* till they groaned in spirit at the very name.

It might seem strange at first sight that we see little or no mention of Bossuet. For the great bishop had been the writer who, at the critical moment, had "touched his trembling ears." The *Discourse of Universal History* had awakened his mind as Lodi awoke his ambition. On the fortunate day when he happened on the discourse, and read of Cæsar, Alexander, and the succession of empires, the veil of the

Digitized by Google

temple, he tells us, was rent, and he beheld the movements of the gods. From that time, in all his campaigns, in Egypt, in Syria, in Germany, on his greatest days, that vision never quitted him. At St. Helena it forsook him forever, and so we need not marvel that he avoids Bossuet.

He had always been a great reader, though he declared that in his public life he only read what was of direct use for his purposes. When he was a scholar at Brienne the frequency of his demands for books was the torment of the college librarian. When he was a lieutenant in garrison at Valence he read ravenously and indiscriminately everything he could lay his hands on. "When I was a lieutenant of artillery," he said, before the collected princes at Erfurt, "I was for three years in garrison at Valence. I spent that time in reading and re-reading the library there." Later, we read of his tearing along to join his armies, his coach full of books and pamphlets, which would be flung out of the window when he had run through them. When he travelled with Josephine, all the newest books were put into the carriage for her to read to him. And though he declared that his reading was purely practical, he always had a travelling library of general literature, with which he took great pains. He had planned a portable collection of three thousand choice volumes which should be printed for him. But when he found it would take six years, and a quarter of a million sterling, to complete, he wisely abandoned the project. Even to Waterloo he was accompanied by a travelling library of eight hundred volumes in six cases—the Bible, Homer, Ossian, Bossuet, and all the seventy volumes of Voltaire. Three days after his final abdi-

Digitized by Google

cation we find him writing for a library from Malmaison, books on America, his chosen destination, books on himself and his campaigns, a collection of the *Moniteur*, the best dictionaries and encyclopædias. Now, in his solitude, he devoured them—history, philosophy, strategy, and memoirs. Of these last alone he read seventy-two volumes in twelve months. Nor was he by any means a passive reader; he would scribble on margins, he would dictate notes or criticisms. But the reading aloud was almost entirely of works of imagination, and the selection does not inspire one with any passionate wish to have been present. Nor, as we have seen, did the actual audience greatly appreciate the privilege.

What strikes one most in his habits is the weariness and futility of it all. One is irresistibly reminded of a caged animal walking restlessly and aimlessly up and down his confined den, and watching the outside world with the fierce despair of his wild eye. If Gourgaud was bored to death, what must the Emperor have been!

He is, as a rule, calm and stoical. Sometimes, indeed, he consoles himself with a sort of abstract grandeur; sometimes he gives a sublime groan. "Adversity was wanting to my career," he says. He takes up one of the official year-books of his reign. "It was a fine empire. I ruled eighty-three millions of human beings—more than half the population of Europe." He attempts to control his emotion, as he turns over the book, even to hum a tune, but is too visibly affected. Another time he sits in silence, his head resting on his hands. At last he rises. "After all, what a romance my life has been!" he exclaims, and walks out of the room. Nor does

Digitized by Google

fame console him, for he doubts it. "All the institutions that I founded are being destroyed, such as the University and the Legion of Honor, and I shall soon be forgotten." And again: "History will scarcely mention me, for I was overthrown. Had I been able to maintain my dynasty, it had been different." Misgiving of the future, self-reproach for the past, the monotony of a suppressed life, these were the daily torments that corroded his soul. For six years he supped the bitterness of slow, remorseful, desolate death.

Moreover, with his restless energy thrown back on himself, he was devoured by his inverted activities. He could not exist except in a stress of work. Work, he said, was his element; he was born and made for work. He had known, he would say, the limits of his powers of walking or of seeing, but had never been able to ascertain the limits of his power of work. His mind and body, says Chaptal, were incapable of fatigue. How was employment to be found at Longwood for this formidable machine? The powers of brain and nerve and body which had grappled with the world now turned on him and rent him. To learn enough English to read in the newspapers what was going on in the Europe which he had controlled, to dictate memoirs giving his point of view of what interested him at the moment, to gossip about his custodians, to preserve order and harmony in his little household, these were the crumbs of existence which he was left to mumble. There is no parallel to his position. The world has usually made short work of its Cæsars when it has done with them. Napoleon had sought death in battle, and by suicide, in vain. The constant efforts of assassination

Digitized by Google

had been fruitless. The hope of our ministers that the French government would shoot or hang him had been disappointed. So Europe buckled itself to the unprecedented task of gagging and paralyzing an intelligence and a force which were too gigantic for the welfare and security of the world. That is the strange, unique, hideous problem which makes the records of St. Helena so profoundly painful and fascinating.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONVERSATIONS OF NAPOLEON

IT is not wise to record every word that falls from a great man in retirement. The mind which is accustomed to constant activity, and which is suddenly deprived of employment, is an engine without guidance; the tongue without a purpose is not always under control. The great man is apt to soliloquize aloud, and then the suppressed volume of passion, of resentment, of scorn, bursts all dams. Napoleon was aware of this danger. "You are right to check me. I always say more than I wish when I allow myself to talk of subjects which so thrill with interest." There is not so much of this as might be expected in the conversation of Napoleon at St. Helena. He sometimes lashes himself into a rage over the governor, and the restrictions, and the rock itself, but as a rule he is calm and meditative, thinking aloud, often with contradictory results. This detachment of mind had been noticed on his return from Elba by Lavallette. "Never did I see him more imperturbably calm; not a word of bitterness with any one; no impatience; listening to everything, and discussing everything, with that rare sagacity and that elevation of mind which were so remarkable in him; avowing his faults with a touching ingenuousness, or discussing his position with a penetration which his enemies could not equal."

Digitized by Google

The recorded conversations of Napoleon present a certain difficulty. After the first two years of the Consulate he rarely unbuttoned himself in talk. And those with whom he may have done so most frequently, such as Duroc, or Berthier, or Bertrand, are mute. He was no doubt a great talker in public, but when he talked in public he said not what he thought, but what he wished to be considered as his ideas. At St. Helena we have a great mass of these disquisitions, for he was always in the presence of diarists, and knew it. Las Cases and Montholon record nothing else. But all through his reign there are abundant notes of the clear, eloquent, pungent discourse which he affected in public. Villemain gives some admirable specimens on the authority of Narbonne. These are almost too elaborate to be exact. There is, however, scarcely one of the innumerable memoirs published on the Napoleonic era which does not attempt to give specimens of Napoleon's talk.

But to get at the man, or what little is accessible of the man, we must go elsewhere. In our judgment, Roederer is the author who renders most faithfully the conversation of Napoleon. He gives us specimens of the earlier consular style when Napoleon was still a republican in manner and surroundings, when he was still a learner in civil government, before he eyed a crown; specimens of his discourse at the council of state; chats at the Malmaison or St. Cloud, and also long conversations of the later period, reported verbatim, with life-like accuracy, so far as one can now judge. Read, for example, Roederer's report of his conversations with Napoleon in January and February, 1809, in 1811, and especially in 1813. They form, in our judgment, the most vivid representa-

Digitized by Google

tions of the Emperor that exist. Concise, frank, sometimes brutal, but always interesting—such seems to have been the real talk of Napoleon. The secret of the charm is that he can bring his whole mind instantaneously into play on a subject, and so he lights it up in a moment with reminiscence, historical parallel, native shrewdness, knowledge of mankind in general and of the men with whom he has had dealings in particular.

It is not possible to give a digest of Napoleon's conversation at St. Helena. It is set forth in a score of volumes of very unequal merit and trustworthiness; it is not always easy to separate the wheat from the chaff. Some of these are filled with dictations by Napoleon, which have, of course, an interest and distinction of their own, but which are not conversations. For talk, as revealing the man, we feel convinced that Gourgaud's is the most faithful transcript, and far superior to the other records. Montholon is not so reliable, or so intelligent. Las Cases pads and fabricates. O'Meara's book is a translation into English of conversations carried on in Italian. It is both spirited and interesting, but does not inspire any confidence. Gourgaud gives, we believe, an honest narrative and, wiping off the bilious hues of jealousy and boredom, an accurate picture. His are, indeed, reminiscences of high interest. But what is really remarkable is the air of rough truth about all that he records. They are not full-dress reminiscences; they are, as it were, the sketch of the moment on the wristband and the thumbnail. Where he differs from Las Cases and Montholon we have no doubt which to believe. On state occasions they hasten to drape their hero in the toga or the dalmatic:

Digitized by Google

Gourgaud takes him as he is, in his bath, in his bed, with a Panama hat or a red Madras handkerchief round his head, in a bad temper or in a good. We will give two instances of what we mean—the executions of Ney and Murat.

Montholon records the Emperor as saying, on February 21st, that "the death of Ney is a crime. The blood of Ney was sacred for France. His conduct in the Russian campaign was unequalled. It should have covered with a holy ægis the crime of high treason, if, indeed, Ney had really committed it. But Ney did not betray the King," and so forth. This expression of feeling is what the public would expect Napoleon to have uttered, though hardly on February 21st, as he did not receive the news of Ney's execution till the middle of March. Gourgaud records no such language; he reports Napoleon as varying in his view. Once he says that they have assassinated Ney; at another time he declares that he only got his deserts. "No one should break his word; I despise traitors." "Ney has dishonored himself." "He was precious on the field of battle, but too immoral and too stupid to succeed." Napoleon even goes so far as to say that he ought never to have made Ney a marshal of France; that he should have left him a general of division; for he had, as Caffarelli had said of him, just the courage and honesty of a hussar. He says that in 1814 he was a mere traitor; that he behaved, as always, like a rascal. Contrast this with the Duchesse d'Angoulême's remorse on reading Ségur's *History of the Russian Campaign*. "Had we known in 1815," she says, "what Ney did in Russia, he would never have been executed." Contrast this with Napoleon himself when in Russia.

Digitized by Google

"What a man! What a soldier! Ney is lost! I have three hundred millions in the cellars of the Tuileries. I would give them all to get him back." We can only conclude from this cruel change that Napoleon never forgot or forgave the terrible interview with Ney at Fontainebleau in April, 1814, nor the vaunt of Ney in 1815 to bring him back in a cage. He only summoned him to the army, indeed, at the last moment before Ligny. At the end there was, in truth, no love lost between the two heroes.

Again there comes the news of the death of Murat. As in the case of Napoleon's discourse to Montholon about Ney's death, there is a strange particularity in this event, in that it is first announced to Napoleon by three separate people. Las Cases reads him the news. "At these unexpected words the Emperor seizes me by the arm, and cries, 'The Calabrians were more humane, more generous, than those who sent me here.' This was all. After a few moments of silence, as he said no more, I continued reading." This, perhaps, is the authorized version, as it is that given in the *Letters from the Cape.*

O'Meara also brought the first news. "He heard it with calmness, and immediately demanded if Murat had perished on the field of battle. At first I hesitated to tell him that his brother-in-law had been executed like a criminal. On his repeating the question, I informed him of the manner in which Murat had been put to death, which he listened to without any change of countenance."

Then Gourgaud brings the first tidings. "I announce the fatal news to His Majesty, who keeps the same countenance, and remarks that Murat must have been mad to risk such an enterprise. I

Digitized by Google

say that it grieves me to think of a brave man like Murat, who had so often faced death, dying by the hands of such people. The Emperor cries out that it is horrible. I urge that Ferdinand should not have allowed him to be killed. 'That is your way of thinking, young people, but one does not trifle with a throne. Could he be considered as a French general? He was one no longer. As a king? But he had never been recognized (by the Bourbons?) as one. Ferdinand had him shot, just as he has had a number of people hanged.'" But Gourgaud watches him, as they read the newspapers to him, and says that he suffers.

We cannot tell which of the three chroniclers really first reported the news to Napoleon, but we feel that Gourgaud's narrative is vivid and true. Long afterwards Napoleon says to Gourgaud: "Murat only got what he deserved. But it is all my fault, for I should have left him a marshal, and never have made him King of Naples, or even Grand Duke of Berg."

So in the few specimens that we propose to give of Napoleon's conversation at St. Helena we shall mainly confine ourselves to the notes taken by Gourgaud. Napoleon, however, repeated himself constantly, and so we obtain corroborative versions of many sayings in all the chronicles of the exile.

One of the chief topics was religion, and one of the books that Napoleon most loved to read aloud was the Bible. The reading was not always for the highest motive, for on one occasion he reads up the books of Samuel and Kings to see what is their testimony in favor of legitimate monarchy. But on other occasions the Bible is read with no such ob-

Digitized by Google

ject; and he was, we are told, a great admirer of St. Paul. His thoughts, indeed, in this dark hour, turn much to questions of faith, not altogether to edification. We have, of course, often read anecdotes in which he is represented as pointing to the firmament, and declaiming a vague deism. Newman, too, in a noble passage, has given from tradition the final judgment passed on Christianity by Napoleon at St. Helena, wherein Napoleon is reported to have compared the shadowy fame of Cæsar and Alexander with the living force of Christ, and to have summed up with, "Can He be less than divine?" But the real Napoleon talked in a very different fashion. Gourgaud talks of the stars and their Creator in the way attributed to Napoleon, but the latter snubs him. Briefly, Napoleon's real leaning seems to be to Mahometanism; his objection to Christianity is that it is not sufficiently ancient. Had it existed, he says, since the beginning of the world, he could believe it. But it had not; nor could it have sustained itself till now without the Crucifixion and the Crown of Thorns, for mankind is thus constituted. Nor can he accept that form of religion which would damn Socrates, Plato, and, he courteously adds, the English. Why, in any case, should punishment be eternal? Moreover, he declares that he was much disturbed by the arguments of the sheiks in Egypt, who contended that those who worshipped three deities must necessarily be pagans.

Mahometanism, on the other hand, is more simple, and, he characteristically adds, is superior to Christianity in that it conquered half the world in ten years, while Christianity took three hundred years to establish itself. Another time he declares

Digitized by Google

Mahometanism to be the most beautiful of all religions. And once he even says, "We Mahometans."

Although he prefers Mahometanism to Christianity, he prefers the Roman to the Anglican communion, or, at any rate, the Roman to the Anglican ritual. He gives as the reason for his preference that in the Roman Church the people do not understand the prayers, and that it is not wise to try and make such matters too clear. And yet he thinks that the clergy should marry, though he should hesitate to confess himself to a married priest, who would repeat everything to his wife. He declares that he himself, having been anointed, is capable of confessing a penitent. He is not so favorable to the hierarchy as to the ritual of Rome. He is hostile to the papacy. Britain and northern Europe have wisely, he says, emancipated themselves from this yoke, for it is ridiculous that the chief of the state should not be chief of the church of the state. For this reason he regrets that Francis I. did not, as he nearly did, emancipate himself and his people by adhering to the Reformation. He himself had regretted in old days, when wearied with his disastrous struggle against the papacy, that instead of concluding the concordat, he had not declared himself a Protestant. The nation would have followed him, and would have thus freed itself from the yoke of Rome.

But, as he proceeds, he becomes more hostile to Christianity. "As for me," he breaks out on one occasion, "my opinion is formed that (the divine?) Christ never existed. He was put to death like any other fanatic who professed to be a prophet or a messiah. There were constantly people of this kind. Then I look back from the New Testament to the Old.

Digitized by Google

I find one able man—Moses—but the Jews are cowardly and cruel." And he ends by returning to the Bible with a map and declaring that he will write the campaigns of Moses.

So slight is his belief in the Saviour that he mentions as an extraordinary fact that Pope Pius VII. did actually believe in Christ.

As to man, he proclaims himself a materialist. Sometimes he thinks that man was created in some particular temperature of the air; sometimes that he was produced from clay, "as Herodotus narrates that Nile mud was transformed into rats," that he was warmed by the sun, and combined with electric fluids. "Say what you like, everything is matter, more or less organized. When out hunting I had the deer cut open and saw that their interior was the same as that of man. A man is only a more perfect being than a dog or a tree, and living better. The plant is the first link in a chain, of which man is the last. I know that this is all contrary to religion, but it is my opinion that we are all matter." Again: "What are electricity, galvanism, magnetism? In these lies the great secret of nature. Galvanism works in silence. I think myself that man is the product of these fluids and of the atmosphere, that the brain pumps up these fluids and imparts life, and that the soul is composed of these fluids, which after death return into the atmosphere, whence they are pumped into other brains."

Again: "When we are dead, my dear Gourgaud, we are altogether dead." What is a soul? Where is the soul of a sleeper or of a madman or of a babe?

Another time he breaks out: "Were I obliged to have a religion, I would worship the sun—the source of all life—the real god of the earth."

Digitized by Google

The editors think that Napoleon talked in this way in a spirit of opposition to Gourgaud, who was a believer—more or less orthodox. He did, we think, often argue thus to bring out the strength of the orthodox position. But often he is only thinking aloud in the bitterness of his heart—as when he says that he cannot believe in a just God punishing and rewarding, for good people are always unfortunate and scoundrels are always lucky. "Look at Talleyrand; he is sure to die in his bed."

Bertrand thinks, says Gourgaud, that the Emperor "has religion," and we certainly think that Napoleon was more religious than these conversations represent. But he had much leeway to make up. He was the child of that Revolution which abjured religion. And yet there was strength in him to perform the most courageous acts of his life, the restoration of the French Church, the conclusion of the concordat, and the compelling his scoffing companions at arms to follow him to church.

Whatever may have been his motives, they must have been potent to make him break with the traditions of his manhood. For religious faith and observance which still lurked timidly in the civil life of France had disappeared from among its soldiers. "The French army at this time," says Count Lavallette of the army of Egypt, "was remarkably free from any feeling of religion."

And the same author tells a curious anecdote of a French officer who was with him on a boat which was nearly wrecked. The officer says the Lord's Prayer from beginning to end. When the danger is over he is much ashamed, and apologizes thus: "I am thirty-eight years old, and I have never uttered

Digitized by Google

a prayer since I was six. I cannot understand how it came into my head just then, for I declare that at this moment it would be impossible for me to remember a word of it." And this hostility to religion seems to have continued, in spite of concordats, to the end of Napoleon's reign; for, as we are told on the same authority, when mass was celebrated in the Emperor's presence at the great function of the Champ de Mai during the Hundred Days, thirteen years after the concordat, every one turned their backs to the altar.

His life of camps, his revolutionary associations, his conflict with the papacy, kept Napoleon aloof from the faith in which he was born. Talleyrand told Charles Greville that Louis XVIII. was surprised, on arriving in Paris, to find that the ante-library of his predecessor's cabinet consisted principally of books on theological subjects, and that these were his favorite study. Greville asked in reply if Talleyrand thought that Napoleon was a believer. "*Je suis porté à croire qu'il était croyant, mais il avait le goût de ces sujets,*" said Talleyrand. We can only offer the commentary that the religious faith of Napoleon was at least equal to that of his successor on the throne, or to that of his prince of Benevento.

All that we can safely gather from his conversation at St. Helena is that his mind turns greatly on these questions of religion. He ponders and struggles. A remark which he lets fall at St. Helena explains probably his normal state of mind. "Only a fool," he says one day, "says that he will die without a confessor. There is so much that one does not know, that one cannot explain." And as he spoke of the mysteries of religion, we may speak of his frame

Digitized by Google

of mind with regard to them. "There is so much that one does not know, that one cannot explain."

Besides this high and engrossing topic, Napoleon ranges over a hundred others, characteristic of the man, and interesting to us, besides his discursive reminiscences and his acute views of the future. These last, as recorded by Las Cases and Montholon, give one the idea rather of political programmes, destined for external consumption, than of his own inner thoughts. Some are professedly so. Montholon, as it were, suddenly produces from his portfolio a constitution dictated by Napoleon for the empire of France under his son. We do not know if it be authentic, but we observe that the editors of the Emperor's works coldly ignore it. We ourselves incline to the belief that it was composed in the seclusion of Ham with an eye to the Bonaparte restoration, which soon afterwards took place. The official editors print, however, Montholon's record of the instructions dictated by the dying man for his son on April 17, 1821, which seems to be a genuine manifesto.

To us, of course, what he says of the English is of rare interest. He had all his life been waging war against Britain in some form or another, and yet he had always been strangely ignorant with regard to us. Metternich, who had been in England, noticed when Napoleon was on the throne, that as regards England he believed only what he chose to believe, and that these ideas were totally false. This is the more strange, for the cause of his victories lay largely in the care with which he studied his adversaries. And, throughout his reign, he had kept a keen eye on British journalism and British politics. His sen-

Digitized by Google

sitiveness to the criticism of English newspapers, which, after all, was the only newspaper criticism that he had to face, was no secret to his household. He insisted on every abusive phrase being translated to him, and was furious at the result. In spite of this painful education he never at St. Helena touched on the English without betraying the strangest ignorance of their character and habits of mind. "Had I," he says, "been allowed to go to London in 1815, I should have been carried in triumph. All the populace would have been on my side, and my reasoning would have convinced the Greys and the Grenvilles." Even had he entered London as a conqueror, he seems to have persuaded himself that the result would have been the same. He told Las Cases that four days after landing in England he would have been in London. "I should have entered it, not as a conqueror, but as a liberator. I should have been William III. over again, but more generous and more disinterested. The discipline of my army would have been perfect, and the troops would have behaved as if they were in Paris. No sacrifices, not even an indemnity, would have been exacted from the English. We should have presented ourselves, not as conquerors, but as brothers who came to restore to them their liberties and their rights. I should have bade the English work out their own regeneration themselves; for, as they were our elders in political legislation, we wished to have nothing to do with it except to enjoy their happiness and prosperity; and I should have acted in good faith. So that in a few months the two nations, so long hostile, would have become identical by their principles, their maxims, and their interests." It is scarcely necessary to

Digitized by Google

point out that he did not believe a word of this ridiculous rhodomontade, but that he should have launched it at all indicates an amazing ignorance of the people whom he proposed to assimilate.

He liked to listen to the stories of Las Cases's residence in England, the scandals of the court, and of Carlton House, where Las Cases had been presented. ("And what the devil were you doing there?" the Emperor not unnaturally asked at this point.) Otherwise he derived but little assistance from his suite in the elucidation of the British character. Gourgaud, for example, thought that the riots, of which so much was being said in England, were a political sect; or, as his editors explain it, the advanced guard of the Whig party.

What did he think of the English? Though he sometimes broke out against them, not unnaturally, he seems to have held them in a certain unspoken respect. "The British nation would be very incapable of contending with us if we had only their national spirit," he said on one occasion. When he is most bitter he quotes Paoli, the real author of the famous phrase, "They are a nation of shopkeepers." "*Sono mercanti*, as Paoli used to say."

Sometimes he gibed, not unreasonably, at the nation which had been his most persistent enemy and which had accepted the invidious charge of his custody. But once he paid them a noble tribute. He begins quaintly enough: "The English character is superior to ours. Conceive Romilly, one of the leaders of a great party, committing suicide at fifty because he had lost his wife. They are in everything more practical than we are: they emigrate, they marry, they kill themselves, with less indecision

Digitized by Google

than we display in going to the opera. They are also braver than we are. I think one can say that in courage they are to us what we are to the Russians, what the Russians are to the Germans, what the Germans are to the Italians." And then he proceeds: "Had I had an English army I should have conquered the universe, for I could have gone all over the world without demoralizing my troops. Had I been, in 1815, the choice of the English, as I was of the French, I might have lost the battle of Waterloo without losing a vote in the Legislature or a soldier from my ranks. I should have won the game." Has there been, considering the speaker and the circumstances, more signal praise of our national character?

On two other occasions, when on the throne, he had, in confidential talk, paid rare compliments to Britain. To Auguste de Staël, who had declared that he could not serve under the French Government, for it had persecuted his mother, Napoleon said, "Then you must go to England, for after all there are only two nations, France and England; the rest are nothing." Still more remarkable was his language to Foy. In the midst of the Peninsular War Foy came to Paris and had two or three interviews with the Emperor. One day Napoleon said to him abruptly: "Tell me, are my soldiers fighting well?" "What do you mean, Sire? Of course . . ." "Yes, yes, I know. But are they afraid of the English soldiers?" "Sire, they respect them, but do not fear them." "Well, you see, the English have always beaten them: Cressy, Agincourt, Marlborough." "But, Sire, the battle of Fontenoy." "Ah! the battle of Fontenoy. That is a day that made the monarchy live forty years longer than it would otherwise."

Digitized by Google

On another occasion, at St. Helena, when Napoleon conceived Lady Malcolm to be saying that he hated England, he interrupted her with much animation, saying she was mistaken, he did not hate the English; on the contrary, he had always had the highest opinion of their character. "I have been deceived, and here I am on a vile rock in the midst of the ocean." "I believe there are more honorable men in England, proportionately, than in any other country—but then there are some very bad; they are in extremes." Again: "The English are quite a different race from us; they have something of the bulldog in them; they love blood. They are ferocious, they fear death less than we do, have more philosophy, and live more from day to day."

He thought well and justly of our blockades (*les anglais bloquent très bien*), but ill, and with even more justice, of our diplomacy. He could not understand, and posterity shares his bewilderment, why the British had derived so little benefit from their long struggle and their victory. He thinks that they must have been stung by the reproach of being a nation of shopkeepers, and have wished to show their magnanimity. "Probably for a thousand years such another opportunity of aggrandizing England will not occur. In the position of affairs nothing could have been refused to you." It was ridiculous, he said, to leave Batavia to the Dutch, and Bourbon and Pondicherry to the French. He would not have given a farthing for either, had it not been for his hope of driving the English out of India. "Your ministers, too," he says, "should have stipulated for a commercial monopoly in the seas of India and China. You ought not to have allowed

Digitized by Google

the French or any other nation to put their nose beyond the Cape. . . . At present the English can dictate to the world, more especially if they withdraw their troops from the Continent, *relegate Wellington to his estates*, and remain a purely maritime power. She can then do what she likes." "You want old Lord Chatham for a prime minister," he says another day.

Again: "You English have imposed a contribution on France of seven hundred millions of francs, but, after all, I imposed one of ten milliards on your country. While you raised yours by your bayonets, I raised mine through your Parliament."

He set himself to learn English, and Las Cases to teach him. The lessons were pursued for three months, "sometimes with an admirable ardor—sometimes with a visible disgust," from January to April, 1816, and then ceased entirely. There had already been an abortive attempt on the voyage. Las Cases, who had himself since his return to France somewhat forgotten the spoken language, says that his illustrious pupil managed to some extent to understand English as he read it, but that his pronunciation was so extraordinary as to constitute to some extent a new language. The longest specimen that we possess of Napoleon's English is thus phonetically given by Henry, who heard it, "Veech you tink de best town?" He wrote an English letter under an assumed name to Las Cases, which the facile courtier declares to have deceived him. We give it here as the only written English of Napoleon's that we possess, and as a proof of the polite credulity of Las Cases.

"Count Lascases. Since sixt wek, y learn the

Digitized by Google

english and y do not any progress. Sixt week do fourty and two day. If might have learn fivty word, for day, i could know it two thousands and two hundred. It is in the dictionary more of foorty thousand; even he could most twenty; bot much of *tems*. For know it or hundred and twenty week which do more two years. After this you shall agree that the study one *tongue* is a great labor who it must *do into the* young aged.

"Longwood, this morning, the seven march thursday one thousand eight hundred sixteen after nativity the yors (*sic*) (lord) Jesus Christ."

It was thus addressed:

"Count Lascases, chambellan of the S.M., Longwood; into his polac: very press."

He read English history with interest, having read none since he left school. "I am reading Hume," he said one day. "These English are a ferocious race; what crimes there are in their history. Think of Henry VIII. marrying Lady Seymour the day after he had had Anne Boleyn beheaded. We should never have done such a thing in our country. Nero never committed such crimes. And Queen Mary! Ah! the Salic law is an excellent arrangement." But the most interesting result of this is that he discourses on the analogies between Cromwell and himself. There is no doubt, he thinks, some resemblance between the reign of Charles I. and the French Revolution, but there can be no real comparison between the position of Cromwell and himself. Napoleon was thrice chosen by the free election of the people, and the French army had only waged war with strangers. Cromwell had one essential quality, dissimulation; he had also great political tal-

Digitized by Google

ents, and consummate judgment, for there was no action in his life which could be criticised as being ill calculated. Was he a great general? Napoleon does not know enough of him to judge.

On French history he makes one or two interesting and indeed startling remarks. St. Louis he considered an "imbecile." To Lady Malcolm he said that Henry IV. was undoubtedly the greatest man that ever sat on the throne of France. But this judgment was only for external use: in his interior circle he spoke very differently. Henry IV., he declared, never did anything great. Voltaire made him the fashion by the *Henriade*, and then he was exalted in order to depreciate Louis XIV., who was hated. Napoleon laughed when he saw Henry described as the greatest captain of ancient or modern times. He was, no doubt, a good sort of man, brave, and would charge sword in hand; but, after all, an old graybeard pursuing women in the streets of Paris could only be an old fool.

Louis XIV., in the opinion of the Emperor, was the greatest King that France had had. "There are only he and I. He had four hundred thousand men under arms, and a King of France who could collect such a host could be no ordinary man. Only he or I was able to raise such armies." Had he himself lived under the old monarchy, he thinks he would have risen to be a marshal. For, as it was, he had been remarked as a lieutenant: he would soon have become a colonel and been placed on the staff of a marshal, whom he would have guided, and under whom he would have distinguished himself.

He utters one speculation on contemporary French history, which must not be taken too seriously.

Digitized by Google

"Would to God," he says, "that the King and the princes had remained (in March, 1815). The troops would have come over to me: the King and the princes would have been massacred; and so Louis XVIII. would not be on the throne." Sometimes in his wrath he flies out against France herself: "She has been violated, she is henceforth only a cowardly, dishonored country. She has only had her deserts, for instead of rallying to me, she deserted me."

He talks freely of his family. And it is perhaps his frankness in this respect that chiefly distinguishes him from a sovereign born in the purple. No one can conceive the contemporary emperors, Alexander or Francis, conversing with their suites on the most intimate family matters. One might almost say that this is the note of distinction between the legitimate and the parvenu sovereign. At any rate, the Empress Catherine, who was born remote from the prospect of a throne, had this surprising candor.

His family was, he says, among the first in Corsica, and he had still a great number of cousins in the island. He reckons them, indeed, at eighty. He was sure that a number of these were among the band of Corsicans who followed Murat in his mad and fatal attempt at Pizzo; though as a matter of fact the clan Bonaparte in Corsica would have nothing to do with Murat or his expedition. But he did not care to be considered a Corsican at all. In the first place, he was French: "I was born in 1769, when Corsica had been united to France"; though his enemies accused him of having exchanged birthdays with Joseph, who was born in 1768, and so before the union. A tactless mayor of Lyons, under this

Digitized by Google

belief, had innocently complimented him on having done so much for France, though not a Frenchman. But, secondly, putting his French nationality aside, he protested that he was rather Ital an or Tuscan than Corsican. Two centuries ago his family lived in Tuscany. "I have one foot in Italy, and one in France." It is obvious to the candid reader that both feet were politically of use to him, for he reigned in France and Italy. His Corsican origin was of no use to him, and was, therefore, minimized.

He makes some curious remarks about his descent. There was a tendency at one time to prove it from the Man in the Iron Mask. It came about in this way. The Governor of Pignerol, where the mysterious prisoner was confined, was named Bompars: he was said to have married his daughter to the captive (who was, in the belief of Napoleon, the brother of Louis XIV.), and smuggled them off to Corsica under the name of Bonaparte. "I had only to say the word," said the Emperor, "and this fable would have been believed."

When he married Marie Louise, the Emperor Francis became anxious as to his son-in-law's nobility of birth, and sent him a packet of papers establishing his descent from the Dukes of Florence. Napoleon returned them to Metternich with the remark that he had nothing to do with such tomfoolery; that in any case the Dukes of Florence were inferior to the Emperors of Germany; that he would not be inferior to his father-in-law, and that his nobility dated from Montenotte.

Napoleon himself seems to incline to one illustrious connection, for he says that the name of Bonaparte is the same as Bonarotti or Buenarotti. Did

Digitized by Google

he, then, believe himself related to Michael Angelo? He regrets, too, that he did not allow an ancestor of his, Bonaventure or Boniface Bonaparte, to be canonized. The Capucins, to which order the monk belonged, were eager for the distinction, which would have cost a million francs. The Pope, when he came to Paris, spontaneously offered this compliment, which Napoleon was inclined to accept, as it would, he thought, conciliate the priesthood. But it was finally decided that it might afford matter for ridicule, so dangerous anywhere, so fatal in France.

Napoleon seems to have no family secrets from his companions. His father died at Montpellier at the age of thirty-five, he says at one time, thirty-nine at another. He had been a man of pleasure all his life, extravagant, "wishing to play the great noble," but at the last he could not have enough monks and priests round him, so that at Montpellier they considered him a saint. Napoleon's great-uncle, to some extent, restored the family fortunes, and died wealthy; so much so that Pauline thought it worth while to steal the purse from under his pillow as he was dying. The Emperor discusses quite calmly a common report that Paoli was his father, but gives a conclusive, but not very refined or decorous, reason for disbelieving it. Still Paoli took a semi-paternal interest in him. "You, Bonaparte, are all Plutarch, you have nothing modern about you," the general said to him. And of him to others: "That young man bears the head of Cæsar on the body of Alexander: there is the stuff of ten Scyllas in him." Both his father and mother were very handsome. She, during her pregnancy, followed the army of independence. The French generals took pity on

Digitized by Google

her, and allowed her to come to her own house for her confinement. She availed herself of the permission, and was delivered of Napoleon. "So that I can say I was conceived when Corsica was independent, and born when Corsica was French." This last point was, of course, capital for him and for his dynasty.

Here perhaps may be noted the singular connection of Napoleon with Corsica. He was born there. He lived there till he was nine. With the first freedom of manhood he returns there. Of the period between January 1, 1786, and June, 1793, he spends more than three years and two months in Corsica. Then he drifts away, never to see the island again, except for a moment on his return from Egypt, and in outline from Elba. Nevertheless, Corsica follows him and profoundly influences his career. During his early years on the island he had contracted a life-long feud, after the Corsican fashion, with Pozzo di Borgo. That vendetta was fateful, if not mortal. For to Pozzo di Borgo, more than to any other single man, is due the first overthrow of Napoleon.

After her flight from Corsica and her arrival at Marseilles, the Emperor's mother was once more, he tells us, in a desperate plight. She and her daughters had not a farthing to live upon. He himself was reduced to an assignat of five francs, and was on the verge of suicide, being indeed on the brink of the Seine for that purpose, when a friend lent him money and saved him. His mother had thirteen children, of whom he was the third. *C'est une maîtresse femme.*

He receives a letter from his mother, and, though he tore it up, is sufficiently moved by it to quote it to his companions. Its tenderness, indeed, might

Digitized by Google

well affect a son; for she wishes, old and blind as she is, to come to St. Helena. "I am very old," she writes, "to make a journey of three thousand leagues. I should die perhaps on the way, but, never mind, I should die nearer you." His nurse, who long survived him, and whom he remembered affectionately in his will, came to Paris for the coronation, where the Pope took so much notice of her that his mother was almost jealous. His foster-brother, her son, became captain of a vessel in the British navy.

Even of his wives he is not chary of talking, nor is he sparing of the most intimate details about both. He wonders if he ever really loved anybody. If so, it was Josephine—a little. She indeed almost always lied, but always cleverly, except with regard to her age. As to that she got into such a tangle that her statements could only be reconciled on the hypothesis that Eugene was twelve years old when he was born. She never asked anything for herself or her children, but made mountains of debt. Her greatest defect was a vigilant and constant jealousy. However, she was not jealous of Marie Louise, though the latter was extremely susceptible as to her predecessor. When the Emperor tried to take his second wife to see his first, the former burst into tears, and she endeavored by every possible ruse and device to prevent his going there.

Marie Louise, he declares, was innocence itself and really loved him. Had she not been influenced by that wretch (*canaille*) Mme. de Montebello, and by Corvisart, who was a scoundrel (*misérable*), she, too, would have followed him to Elba. "And then her father has placed that *polisson* Neipperg by

Digitized by Google

her side." This is perhaps the only avowal which we have from Napoleon, who kept up appearances gallantly to the last, that he was aware of his wife's infidelity; though Lavallette informed him of it during the Hundred Days, and his suite were all gossiping about the scandal. Still he always praises Marie Louise and gives, in sum, the following account of her. She was never at ease with the French, remembering they had killed her aunt Marie Antoinette. She was always truthful and discreet, and courteous to all, even those whom she most detested. She was cleverer than her father, whom alone of her family she loved: she could not bear her stepmother. Different in this from Josephine, she was delighted when she received ten thousand francs to spend. One could have trusted her with any secret, and she had been enjoined at Vienna to obey Napoleon in everything. She was a charming child, a good woman, and had saved his life. And yet, all said and done, he loved Josephine better. Josephine was a true woman, she was his choice, they had risen together. He loved her person, her grace. "She would have followed me to Elba," he says, with oblique reproach. Had she had a child of his, he would never have left her. It would have been better so for her, and for France. For it was Austria that lost him. But for the Austrian marriage, he would never have made war on Russia. He declares that he has made up his mind, should Marie Louise die, not to marry again. Considering the circumstances in which he was placed, and the area of choice presented to him at St. Helena, there is something half comic, half tragic, in the declaration.

To his little son he makes one bitter allusion.

Digitized by Google

Gourgaud, on the 15th of August, the imperial festival, presents the Emperor with a bouquet as if from the King of Rome. "Bah!" says Napoleon rudely, "the King of Rome thinks no more of me than he does of you." But that his thoughts were always with the boy his will and, indeed, his conversations sufficiently prove. It was his intention, he says, to have given the Kingdom of all Italy, with Rome as the capital, to his second son, had he had one.

Caroline, who married Murat, was considered, he tells us, in childhood to be the dunce and Cinderella of the family. But she developed favorably, and became a capable and handsome woman. He cannot, however, disguise his fury with her second marriage. He can scarcely believe it—after twenty years of marriage, within fifteen months of the violent death of her husband, with children grown up, that she should marry again, publicly, and where, of all places?—at Vienna. If the news be true, it will have astonished him more than anything that ever happened. Human nature is indeed strange. And then explodes his inmost thought: "*Ah! la coquine, la coquine, l'amour la toujours conduite.*"

We have seen that he considered Louis XIV. the greatest of French sovereigns, and this news of Caroline's marriage produces the strangest of analogies between them. Readers of St. Simon will recollect the vivid description he gives of the day when Louis XIV. received the tidings that his cherished son, the Duc du Maine, had, on a signal occasion, behaved with something less than conspicuous courage. How the King, then at Marly, perceives a scullion pocketing a biscuit: how his suppressed fury breaks out and wreaks itself on the relatively innocent ob-

Digitized by Google

ject: how he rushes up before the astonished court and breaks his stick on the servant's back: how the man flies, and the King stands swearing at him, and impotently brandishing the stump of his cane. The courtiers cannot believe their eyes, and the King retires to conceal his agitation. So, on hearing of Caroline's nuptials, Napoleon sits down to dinner bursting with uncontrollable wrath. He declares that the pastry is gritty, and his anger, expending itself on the cook, passes all restraint. Rarely, says Gourgaud—never, says Montholon—has the Emperor been seen in such a rage. He orders that the man shall be beaten and dismissed. The scene is grotesque and painful enough, but it is Caroline, not the cook, that is the cause.

It was not, we may surmise, his sister's marriage alone that provoked this explosion. The news had probably brought back to him that day, in 1814, when he received the news that Murat had betrayed him and turned his arms against France. The Emperor's feeling for Murat then was a bitter contempt for the "barber," as he called him, whom he had raised to be a king. His anger he reserved for his sister, who, as he knew, governed and directed her husband. His language about her, too, was such, as reported by Barras (who is, however, a questionable witness in matters relating to Napoleon), that a French editor, by no means squeamish, is unable to print it. In any case, whether indelicate or not, we may be sure that it was forcible, and that on this day of petulance the misalliance of Caroline brought to his mind a darker tragedy and a direr wrath.

Of his brothers he says little that is worth recording, in view of other and fuller revelations elsewhere.

Digitized by Google

He declares compendiously that they have done him much harm. He made a great mistake, he says, in making Joseph a king, especially in Spain, where a firm and military sovereign was required—whereas Joseph thought of nothing but gallantry at Madrid. Joseph, in his great brother's opinion, was not a soldier, though he fancied himself one, nor was he even brave. It may here be mentioned that as Napoleon's appearance deteriorated at St. Helena it strikingly resembled that of Joseph. Las Cases declares that on at least one occasion he could have sworn that it was Joseph and not Napoleon whom he saw. With regard to Louis and Lucien, their mania for publishing indifferent verses, and dedicating them to the Pope, is a constant perplexity to him. Of both poetasters he remarks at different times: "*Il faut avoir le diable au corps.*" Lucien, says Napoleon, wished, after Brumaire, to marry the Queen of Etruria, and threatened if this were refused to marry a woman of bad character—a menace which he carried out. He was, in his brother's judgment, useless during the Hundred Days; but aspired after Waterloo to the dictatorship. He pointed out that his relations to the Republican party would make him acceptable to them, and that he would give the military command to the Emperor. Napoleon, without answering this strange rhapsody, turned to Carnot, who declared unhesitatingly that he could speak on behalf of the Republicans, not one of whom would prefer Lucien's dictatorship to the Emperor's. Eliza, the member of his family who most resembled him in character and talents, and whom, perhaps for that reason, he disliked, he scarcely mentions; nor does he say much of the exquisite and voluptuous Pauline. And in-

Digitized by Google

deed from the world at large the family has scarcely received sufficient attention. For it was an astonishing race. Born and reared in poverty and obscurity, it assumed a divine right with easy grace. No Bourbons or Hapsburgs were so imbued with their royal prerogatives as these princes of an hour. Joseph believed firmly that he would easily have established himself as King of Spain if Napoleon would only have withdrawn his troops. Louis had the same conviction with regard to Holland. Murat and Caroline were not less fatuous at Naples. Jerôme promptly established the state and etiquette of a petty Louis XIV. Not less remarkable was their tenacity of character. An unfriendly commentator is forced to admit that their qualities or defects were all out of the common. The women even approached greatness. Caroline and Eliza had striking qualities. And all, brothers and sisters, had something of the inflexibility of their mighty head, and the fullest possible measure of his self-confidence. They frequently defied him. Some did not scruple to abandon him. The two governing sisters tried to cut themselves adrift from his fortunes, and make terms as independent sovereigns with the enemy. Lucien believed that he could more than fill the place of Napoleon. In this astounding race, says Pasquier, the most binding engagements and the most sacred affections melted away at the first aspect of a political combination.

His confidences do not end with his family, for he likes to talk of his loves. He has had, as he counts on his fingers, seven mistresses in his life: *C'est beaucoup.* But, after all, it is not much when we remember that a learned and competent historian

Digitized by Google

is devoting three thick volumes to this side of Napoleon's character. Of the most famous, Mme. Walewska, to whom at one time he seems to have been sincerely attached (though he thought all Polish women addicted to intrigue), he speaks with great detachment. She was obtained for him, he declares, by Talleyrand. He avers to Gourgaud, when vexed with the general, that when they started for St. Helena he would have given her to Gourgaud as a wife, but not now, such was the change of his sentiments. He hears with complacency that she has married M. d'Ornano. "She is rich and must have saved, and I settled a great deal on the two children." "Your Majesty," says the tactless equerry, "paid Mme. Walewska ten thousand francs a month." The Emperor blushes, and asks him how he knows this. "Lord!" says Gourgaud, "as if I were not too close to Your Majesty not to know that sort of thing: your household knew everything." On another occasion Napoleon declares that one of his main grievances against Murat was that King Joachim had sequestrated, in 1814, the Neapolitan estates of Mme. Walewska.

He speaks with candor of his relations with Mlle. Georges and Mme. Grassini, with Mme. Duchâtel, Mme. Galliéno, and a Mme. Pellaprat. Of another lady, whose name Gourgaud does not record, but who is sufficiently described to be recognized as Mme. Fourés, he says, "She was seventeen, and I was commander-in-chief!" He was supposed when Emperor to disdain female society: he admits the fact and explains it. He declares that he was naturally susceptible, and feared to be dominated by women. Consequently he had avoided them, but

Digitized by Google

in this, he confesses, he made a great blunder. Were he again on the throne he should make a point of spending two hours a day in conversation with ladies, from whom he should learn much. He had endeavored during the Hundred Days, indeed, to repair the fault of his former indifference. But whatever he may have been in France, he is diffuse on this topic at St. Helena. When he finds himself engaged in a gloomy retrospect, he turns the conversation by saying, "Let us talk about women," and then, like a good Frenchman, he discusses the subject with a zest worthy of Henry the Fourth. During one dinner, for example, the conversation turns entirely on the question whether fat women are more admirable than thin. He discourses on his preference for fair women over dark. Time has to be killed.

Naturally, he likes most to talk of his battles—of which he counts no less than sixty—and speaks of them with simple candor. "War," he says, "is a strange art. I have fought sixty battles, and I assure you that I have learned nothing from all of them that I did not know in the first. Look at Cæsar; he fights in the first battle as in the last."

He takes full responsibility for the Russian campaign. "I was master; all blame rests on me" (though he cannot bring himself to make the same admission with regard to Waterloo). When he knew at Dresden that he would not have the support of Sweden or Turkey, he should not have proceeded with the expedition. But even then, had he not remained in Moscow, he would have been successful. That was his great fault. "I ought to have only remained there a fortnight. After arriving there I

Digitized by Google

should have crushed what remained of Kutusow's army, marched on Malo-Jaroslavetz, Toula, and Kaluga, proposing to the Russians to retire without destroying anything."

He constantly repeats that his marriage with Marie Louise was the cause of the war with Russia, for it made him feel sure of the support of Austria. Prussia, too, was, as usual, he says, pining for aggrandizement, and so he reckoned with confidence on these two powers, though he had no other allies. But "I was in too great a hurry. I should have remained a year on the Niemen and in Prussia, and then devoured Prussia." It is strange, indeed, to observe how heartily, as if by a foreboding, he hates Prussia. He bitterly regrets that at Tilsit he did not dispose of the King and proclaim that the house of Hohenzollern had ceased to reign. He is confident that Alexander would not have opposed such a course, provided Napoleon did not himself annex the kingdom. A petty Hohenzollern prince on his staff had, he tells us, asked for the Prussian throne, and Napoleon would have been disposed to give it him had he been descended from the great Frederick (who, by-the-bye, was childless). But his family was a branch which had separated three centuries ago from the royal stock. And then, says the Emperor, with less verisimilitude, I was overpersuaded by the King of Prussia.

He made, he admits, a fatal mistake in not sending Ferdinand back to Spain after the Russian campaign, for that would have restored to him one hundred and eighty thousand good soldiers. The Spanish blunder began, he confesses, from his having said to himself, on watching the quarrels of the

Digitized by Google

Spanish Bourbons: "Let us get rid of them, and there will be no more Bourbons left." He apparently counted the Sicilian Bourbons for nothing.

Still it is to Austria, in his judgment, that he owes his fall. Without Essling he would have destroyed the Austrian monarchy, but Essling cost him too dear Austria is, he thinks, the real enemy of France, and he regrets having spared her. At one moment he had thoughts of causing a revolution there; at another, of carving her into three kingdoms—Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia.

What, does he think, was his most brilliant victory? Austerlitz? Perhaps, he answers. But he has a leaning for Borodino; it was superb; it was fought so far from home. At Austerlitz was the best army, and at Wagram the largest army, that he had ever commanded in battle. After Austerlitz the quality of his army declined. He recurs with constant pride to the strategy of Eckmühl: "that superb manœuvre, the finest that I ever executed," where, with fifty thousand men, he defeated a hundred and twenty thousand. Had he slept the previous night, he could never have won that victory. As it was, he had to kick Lannes awake. A commander-in-chief should never sleep; it is then that he should work. That is why he used a carriage to avoid unnecessary fatigue in the day-time. Joseph lost the battle of Vittoria by his somnolence.

A great general, he says, is rarely found. Of all the generals produced by the Revolution, Desaix and Hoche are the only ones, he thinks, who had the makings of one. The campaign of Dumouriez in Champagne was extremely fine and bold: he was the only man produced out of the nobility. Kléber,

Digitized by Google

says Napoleon, oddly enough, had the qualities and defects of a tall man. Turenne is the greatest of French generals; he is the only one who became bolder with old age. "He does exactly what I should have done in his place. . . . Had he come to me at Wagram, he would at once have understood the position. So would Condé, but not Cæsar or Hannibal. Had I had a man like Turenne to second me in my campaigns, I should have been master of the world; but I had nobody. When I was absent my lieutenants were always beaten. . . . Condé was a general by intuition, Turenne by experience. I think much more highly of Turenne than of Frederick. In the place of that sovereign he would have done much more, and would not have committed Frederick's mistakes. Frederick, indeed, did not thoroughly understand artillery."

"I count myself for half in the battles I have won, and it is much even to name the general in connection with a victory, for it is, after all, the army that wins it." And yet he sets great store by officers. "A perfect army," he says, on another occasion, "would be that in which each officer knew what to do according to circumstances; the best army is that which is nearest to this."

In his judgment of hostile generals, when in active life, he had been politic. A trustworthy associate of his in those days records that Napoleon often said that Alvinzy was the best general that he had ever had opposed to him in Italy, and for that reason he had never mentioned Alvinzy in his bulletins, whereas he constantly commended Beaulieu, Würmser, or the Archduke Charles, whom he did not fear. It seems probable that he afterwards en-

Digitized by Google

tertained a higher opinion of the archduke. He declined, as we have seen, to confide his opinion of Wellington to Warden, and at St. Helena he could not be fair to the duke. But, when on the throne, he had coupled Wellington's name with his own in a strange connection. It was because Wellington had devastated the country in his retreat on Lisbon. "Only Wellington and I are capable of executing such measures." And he adds, with perversity, that he regards the ravaging of the Palatinate as the greatest act of Louvois.

He regretted Elba. "This day year I was at Elba," he says, gloomily. Had the stipulated income been paid, he would have kept open house for the learned men of Europe, for whom he would have formed a centre. He would have built a palace for them, and led a country-house life surrounded by men of mark. He would, too, have enriched the island by throwing open its little ports. Lucien, who seems not to have thoroughly understood his brother, wished to have the minerals of the island for nothing.

But Bertrand confided to Gourgaud that St. Helena was better than Elba; that, at any rate, they were more unhappy at Elba. It was terrible to leave the most splendid throne in the world for a tiny island where one was not even sure of a good reception; and for four months they were deeply depressed. Here the greatness of the fall was less sensible; they had become accustomed to it. Napoleon on this point declared conflicting opinions. Sometimes he regrets Elba: often he abuses St. Helena, but on one occasion he launches into praise of it, at any rate as a residence for his suite. "We are very happy

Digitized by Google

here; we can ride, we have a good table, we can go away whenever we like, we are well received everywhere, and covered with glory," records the unhappy Gourgaud, at whom this discourse was aimed.

In speaking of Elba, the Emperor gives one curious detail. When he left Fontainebleau, in 1814, he had little hope of returning. The first hope that he conceived arose from his perceiving that no officers' wives were invited to the banquets at the Hôtel de Ville.

One of his favorite topics, in treating which he reveals the practical character of his mind, is that of private budgets. He is always discussing them. At one time it is the budget of a man of two hundred thousand francs a year. The imaginary person is French, of course; for a Dutchman, he declares, in a tone of approbation, would with such an income only spend thirty thousand francs a year. Another time he reckons up the expenditure of a man with five hundred thousand francs a year. This is the fortune he would himself prefer; to live in the country with five hundred thousand or six hundred thousand francs a year, and with a little house in Paris like the one that he had in the Rue Chantereine. But he could live very comfortably on twelve francs a day. He would dine for thirty sous; he would frequent reading-rooms and libraries, and go to the play in the pit. His room would cost him a louis a month. But suddenly he remembers that he must have a servant, for he can no longer dress himself, and so he raises his figure and says that one could be very happy with twenty francs a day—it is only a question of limiting one's wants. He would amuse himself greatly, living only with people of a similar fortune.

Digitized by Google

The most comical result of this habit, or game of calculation, appears when he re-reads *Clarissa Harlowe*. He cannot wade through it, though he devoured it at eighteen, and so forth. But what really perplexes him is the personal expenditure of Lovelace. "He has only two thousand a year: I made out his budget at once."

In the same practical spirit of detail, when waiting for a moment in Montholon's sitting-room, he hastily values the furniture piece by piece, and appraises it at thirty napoleons at most.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV

THE SUPREME REGRETS

HE seems to concentrate the main regrets of his solitude on three capital points: that he could not have died at some supreme moment of his career; that he left Egypt and gave up his Eastern ambitions; and, of course, Waterloo. As to the first, he discusses the right moment with his suite. "For the sake of history, I should have died at Moscow, Dresden, or Waterloo." Again: "I should have died after my entry into Moscow;" or "I should have died at La Moskowa." Gourgaud thinks either Moscow or Waterloo, and only leans to the latter date as including the return from Elba. Las Cases protests against Moscow, as omitting so much.

On another occasion Napoleon again leans to Moscow. Had a cannon-ball from the Kremlin killed him, his greatness would have endured, because his institutions and his dynasty would, he declares, have survived in France. As it is, he will be almost nothing to posterity, unless his son should come to mount the throne. "Had I died at Moscow," he says on another occasion, "I should have left behind me a reputation as a conqueror without a parallel in history. A ball ought to have put an end to me there."

Again: "To die at Borodino would have been to die like Alexander; to be killed at Waterloo would

Digitized by Google

have been a good death; perhaps Dresden would have been better; but, no, better at Waterloo. The love of the people, their regret."

The greatest moment in his life, he thinks, was his stay at Dresden in 1812, when every sovereign in Europe, except the Sultan, the Russian Emperor, and the King of Great Britain, was at his feet. What was his happiest? To O'Meara he says the march from Cannes to Paris. But on another occasion he asks his suite to guess. Gourgaud guesses the occasion of his (second) marriage. Mme. Montholon thinks his nomination as First Consul. Bertrand, the birth of the King of Rome. Napoleon answers: "Yes, I was happy as First Consul, at the marriage, at the birth of the King of Rome, *mais alors je n'étais pas assez d'aplomb.* Perhaps it was at Tilsit: I had gone through vicissitudes and anxieties, at Eylau among others, and I had come out victorious, with emperors and kings paying court to me. Perhaps I was happiest after my victories in Italy: what enthusiasm, what cries of 'Long live the Liberator of Italy'—and all at twenty-five. From that time I saw what I might become. I already saw the world beneath me, as if I were being carried through the air."

Then he is sorry that he ever left Egypt. He regrets the career that Asia offered to him; he would rather have been Emperor of the East than Emperor of the West, for in the former case he would have been still on the throne. His later dreams, as well as his earlier, turn to the Orient. At the first glimpse of St. Helena from the ship he says, criticising the aspect of the place, that he should have done better to remain in Egypt, for he would now be Emperor of

Digitized by Google

the entire East. That empire, he declares, would have suited him; for the desert had always had a particular attraction for him, and his own name Napoleon means, he says, "lion of the desert." "Arabia awaits a man. With the French in reserve, and the Arabs as auxiliaries, I should have seized Judea; I should have been master of the East." "Had I taken Acre, I should have gone to India. I should have assumed the turban at Aleppo, and have headed an army of two hundred thousand men. The East," he goes on repeating, "only awaits a man." "Had I," he says another time, "been able to make allies of the Mamelukes, I should have been master of the East. Arabia awaits a man."

It was not, however, because of Arabia or Judea that Napoleon regretted Egypt. He reveals his secret aim in a laconic sentence. "France, mistress of Egypt, would be mistress of India." And again: "The master of Egypt is the master of India." And again: "Egypt once in possession of the French, farewell India to the British. This was one of the grand projects I aimed at." He would have constructed two canals—one from the Red Sea to the Nile at Cairo, the other from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. He would have extended the dominion of Egypt to the south, and would have enlisted the blacks of Sennaar and Darfur. With sixty or seventy thousand of these, and thirty thousand picked Frenchmen, he would have marched in three columns on the Euphrates, and, after making a long halt there, would have proceeded to conquer India. On arriving in India, he would have allied himself with the Mahrattas, and had hopes, apparently, of seducing the sepoy troops. The British, he declares,

Digitized by Google

were much afraid of this scheme of his. "Gorgotto, I have been reading three volumes on India. What rascals the English are! If I had been able to get to India from Egypt with the nucleus of an army, I should have driven them from India. The East only wants a man. The master of Egypt is the master of India. But now we shall see what will come to them from Russia. The Russians, already in Persia, have not far to go to reach India." And then he repeats his constant preoccupation. "Russia is the power that marches the most surely, and with the greatest strides, towards universal dominion, . . . for now there is no France and, therefore, no equilibrium."

He had been, in effect, Emperor of the West, and Montholon tells Gourgaud that, from his instructions as ambassador, he inferred that Napoleon meant to be crowned by that title. The Confederation of the Rhine was being influenced in this direction, and at Erfurt, it is said, the matter would have been settled, had not Alexander demanded Constantinople as a counterbalance. At St. Helena, however, his regrets are not for that position, but for the empire of the East. And the reason is twofold: as ruler of the East he would have struck a great blow at the British, and would have emulated Alexander the Great. For here let us note that his real hero and model is Alexander. It is not merely his campaigns that Napoleon admires, for these one cannot, he says, well conceive, but his statesmanship. In his thirty-fourth year he leaves an immense and well-established empire. He had, too, the art of making friends of the peoples that he conquered. It was a great act of policy to go to the temple of Ammon, for it was thus that he conquered Egypt. "So I, had I re-

Digitized by Google

mained in Egypt, should probably have founded an empire like Alexander, by going on a pilgrimage to Mecca." Even as he leaves France in the *Bellerophon* he says to Captain Maitland: "Had it not been for you English I should have been Emperor of the East; but wherever there is water to float a ship, we are sure to find you in our way."

Nor did his admiration for Alexander the Great, his passion for the East, his aims on India, ever forsake him, until he had lost his empire on the plains of Russia and Germany. Not long before he passed the Niemen, in the midst of a conversation with Narbonne, he broke off, with a sudden flash in his eyes: "After all," he exclaimed, as if under the inspiration of a vision, "this long journey is the way to India. Alexander had to make as long a march as that from Moscow to India in order to gain the Ganges. I have always said so to myself since the siege of Acre. Without the English filibuster and the French emigrant who directed the Turkish artillery, and who, with the plague, made me raise the siege, I would have conquered half Asia, and come back upon Europe to seek the thrones of France and Italy. I must now do just the reverse, and from the extremity of Europe invade Asia in order to attack England. You are aware of the missions of Gardanne and Jaubert to Persia; there has been no outward result; but I have all the maps and statistics of population for a march from Erivan and Tiflis to India. That would be a campaign less formidable, perhaps, than that which awaits us in the next three months. . . . Suppose Moscow taken, Russia crushed, the Czar reconciled or assassinated in some palace plot, succeeded, perhaps, by a new and dependent dynasty.

Digitized by Google

Would it not then be possible for a great French army, with auxiliaries from Tiflis, to attain the Ganges? Once touched by a French sword, the scaffolding of mercantile power in India would fall to the ground. It would be a gigantic expedition, I admit, but practicable in this nineteenth century." Who will maintain, who reads this, that absolute power had not had its usual effect, and that Napoleon had preserved, in 1812, the balance and sanity of his judgment?

The third great subject of regret is, of course, Waterloo, over which we sometimes seem to hear him gnash his teeth. "Ah! if it were to begin again!" he exclaims. He cannot understand how he lost it. Perhaps the rain of the 17th? Had he had Suchet at the head of Grouchy's army, had he had Andréossi in Soult's place, could Bessières or Lannes have commanded the Guard, had he given the command of the Guard to Lobau, had Murat headed the cavalry, had Clausel or Lamarque been at the War Office, all might have been different. Should he have waited a fortnight longer? He would then have had the twelve thousand men employed in La Vendée. But who could tell that La Vendée would be so soon pacified? Should he have attacked at all? Should he not have concentrated all his troops under Paris, and awaited events? Perhaps then the allies would not have attacked him. It is noteworthy, he says, that all their proclamations are dated after Waterloo. He should not, he thinks, have employed Ney or Vandamme. More than once he says he lost it because of the fault of an officer who gave Guyot the order to charge with the Horse Grenadiers, for had they been kept in reserve they would have retrieved the day; but Montholon declares that there is no doubt that the Em-

Digitized by Google

peror gave the order himself. He had not been able to see the battle well. But the men of 1815 were not the men of 1792; the generals had become timid. He is too apt, indeed, to blame his generals, such as Ney and Vandamme. Gourgaud begs him to be more lenient; he replies, "One must speak the truth." He goes so far as to declare that the whole glory of the victory belongs to the Prince of Orange. Without him the British army would have been annihilated, and Blucher hurled back beyond the Rhine. This is a good instance of his occasional petulance. He exhausts himself in reasons for his defeat, but begins at last to perceive that some part of the result may have been due to the character of the enemy. "The English won by the excellence of their discipline," he admits; then wanders on to other reasons. But this may be taken to be his summing up: "It was a fatality, for, in spite of all, I should have won that battle. . . . Poor France, to be beaten by those scoundrels! But 'tis true there had already been Cressy and Agincourt." A thought which, as we have seen, had long been present to his mind.

Then, what should he have done after Waterloo? There is only one point on which he is always clear and constant—that he should have had Fouché hanged or shot at once. He had the military commission all ready to try him; it was that which had tried the Duc d'Enghien, men who ran the danger of being hanged themselves. But beyond that it is all darkness. Sometimes he thinks he should have shot Soult, but when, or why, does not clearly appear. He would, he says at other times, have beheaded Lafayette, Lajuinais, and a dozen, sometimes even a hundred, others. Gourgaud and he often discuss this

Digitized by Google

interesting point. On one occasion Napoleon alludes to the plan of convoking at the Tuileries the council of state, the six thousand men of the Imperial Guard in Paris, the faithful part of the National Guard, and the *fédérés*, haranguing them, and marching on the Chambers, which he would have adjourned or dissolved. He thinks he could thus have gained a respite of a fortnight, in which he would have fortified the right bank of the Seine and collected one hundred thousand men. Gourgaud gloomily replies that in the state of public opinion this would not have been practicable, and hints at a "Decius," who with a pistol shot would have killed the Emperor. Las Cases also felt that this course would have been futile, and have damned the Emperor in history. Gourgaud's own plan was different. He thinks that the Emperor should have gone straight from Waterloo to the Chambers, exhorted them to union, and made them feel that all depended on it. In reply, Napoleon thinks aloud. He had been three days without eating, and he was worn out. Had he gone to the Chambers, it would have been no use simply to harangue; he must have gone like a Cromwell, and thrown a certain number of deputies into the river. By this he means, as he explains more in detail, that he would have demanded the purification of the Chamber, and have hanged seven or eight deputies, with Fouché, of course, at their head. But to do this he must have thrown himself into the arms of the Jacobins: it would have been anarchy. Putting that on one side, he doubted of success; he would have disappeared in bloodshed and abhorrence. Another time he says, frankly, he had not the courage to do it. Could one at such a

Digitized by Google

moment revolutionize the populace and raise the guillotine? In 1793 it was the only way, but not then. And, indeed, he would not have succeeded, for he had too many enemies—it would have been a horrible risk, much blood, and little result. He preferred, therefore, to abdicate in favor of his son, and make it clear to the nation that the allies were the enemies, not of himself alone, but of France. So he said to the Chambers: "Well, gentlemen, you think me an obstacle to peace? Very well, then, get out of the scrape without me."

Gougaud is not satisfied; he presses the Emperor, and says that his mere presence would have electrified the deputies, and so forth.

Napoleon replies, with a sepulchral truth, "*Ah! mon cher, j'étais battu.*" "As long as I was feared," he continues, "great was the awe I inspired; but not having the rights of legitimate sovereignty, when I had to ask for help, when, in short, I was defeated, I had nothing to hope. No. I only reproach myself for not having put an end to Fouché, and he but just escaped." Then he returns again. "Yes, I ought to have gone to the Chambers, but I was tired out, and I could not anticipate that they would turn against me so quickly, for I arrived at eight o'clock, and at noon they were in insurrection; they took me by surprise." He passes his hand over his face, and continues in a hollow voice: "After all, I am only a man. But I ought to have put myself at the head of the army, which was in favor of my son, and, whatever happened, it would have been better than St. Helena.

"Then again, the allies would have declared that they were only warring against me, and the army

Digitized by Google

would have come to believe it. History will perhaps reproach me for having succumbed too easily. There was a little pique on my part. I offered at Malmaison to place myself once more at the head of the army, but the government would not have it, so I left them to themselves.

"The fact is that I came back too soon from Elba, but I thought the Congress was dissolved. No doubt I ought to have declared myself dictator, or have formed a council of dictatorship under Carnot, and not to have called the Chambers together; but I hoped that the allies would feel confidence in me when they heard of my convoking a parliament; and that the Chambers would give me resources that, as dictator, I could not obtain. But they did nothing for me; they were injurious before Waterloo, and abandoned me after it. In any case, it was a mistake to trouble myself about a constitution, as, had I been victorious, I should soon have sent the Chambers to the right-about. I was wrong, too, to quarrel with Talleyrand. But this sort of talk puts me out of temper. Let us go into the drawing-room and talk of our early loves."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV

NAPOLEON AND THE DEMOCRACY

ONE point is clear in all these discussions on Waterloo and its sequel: so clear, and yet so unnoticed, that it seems worth a short digression. Whatever Napoleon may occasionally say in retrospect, with regard to placing himself at the head of a popular and revolutionary movement after Waterloo, we are convinced that he was only deluding himself, or toying with his audience. "The recollections of my youth deterred me," he said with truth at St. Helena. He had seen too much of the Revolution to face any such contingency. He had been the friend of Robespierre, or rather of Robespierre's brother, but after having reigned over France as a sovereign he entertained, it is clear, the profoundest repugnance to anything resembling revolution, or even disorder. No eye-witness of the Terror was affected by a more profound reaction than Napoleon. It had left him with a horror for excess, and a passion for order. He could have uttered with absolute truth the proud words which his dynastic successor uttered with more imperfect fulfilment: "*Pour l'ordre, j'en réponds.*"

This was no secret to his intimates. He feared the people, said Chaptal; the least discontent or disturbance, the slightest rising affected him more than

Digitized by Google

the loss of a battle. He was perpetually vigilant on this point. He would send for his ministers and say that there was not enough work, that the artisans would lend an ear to agitators, and that he feared an insurrection from loss of bread more than a battle against two hundred thousand men. He would then order stuffs and furniture, and he would advance money to the principal manufacturers. One of these crises cost him in this way more than two millions sterling. When I hear people, writes Mme. de Rémusat, saying how easy it is to govern by force, I think of the Emperor; of how he used to harp on the difficulties arising from the use of force against citizens; of how, when his ministers advised any strong measure, he would ask, "Will you guarantee that the people will not rise against it?" He would take pleasure in talking of the emotions of battle, but would turn pale at the narration of the excesses of a revolted people. The Revolution had, indeed, set her seal on him; he had never forgotten it. He represented and embodied it, but was always silently contending against it. And he knew it to be a hopeless battle. "I, and I alone, stand between society and the Revolution," he would say; "I can govern as I like. But my son will have to be a Liberal." And he was right, for in the ten months during which he was absent at Elba the Revolution reared its head once more. It was always present to him, not as his source or inspiration, but as a nameless terror to be averted at any cost. He was, indeed, the child of the Revolution, but a child whose one object was parricide.

He dreaded the idea of firing upon the people; he preserved a life-long regret for his action in the Ven-

Digitized by Google

démiaire outbreak, which he feared the people would never forget: he was prepared, as we have seen, at almost any cost to avert and buy off the material discontent of the people. But his hatred of the Revolution and its methods went far beyond such demonstrations as these, considerable though they be. For he would not touch the Revolution, even to save his crown or himself. Hostility to the Revolution could not go beyond this. He had seen, and seen with bitter outspoken contempt, Louis XVI. bow to the multitude from the balcony of the Tuileries with the cap of liberty on his head. Not to preserve his liberty or his dynasty would Napoleon for a moment assume that cap.

After Waterloo the multitude (*canaille*, as Napoleon generally called them at St. Helena) thronged round his palace and begged him to lead them; for they considered him the only barrier against feudalism, against the resumption of the confiscated property, and against foreign domination. "What do these people owe me?" Napoleon, as he hears them, breaks out with sudden candor. "I found them poor; I leave them poor." Montholon preserves for us one of these scenes. "Two regiments and a vast multitude from the Faubourg St. Antoine come to demand that he shall lead them against the enemy. One of their spokesmen alludes to the Eighteenth of Brumaire. Napoleon replies that circumstances are changed, that what was then the summary expression of the unanimous wish of the people would now require an ocean of French blood, and that he would shed none on behalf of a personal cause." And when the multitude is dispersed he explains himself more fully to Montholon. "Were I," he said, "to put into

Digitized by Google

action the brute force of the masses, I should no doubt save Paris, and assure the crown to myself without having recourse to the horrors of civil war, but I should also risk a deluge of French blood. What power would be sufficient to dominate the passions, the hatred, the vengeance, that would be aroused? No! I cannot forget that I was brought from Cannes to Paris amid sanguinary cries of 'Down with the priests! Down with the nobles!' I prefer the regrets of France to her crown." During that famous march the passion of the people, stirred by the brief government of the Bourbons, had made the deepest impression on him. Had he consented to associate himself with their fury at the suspected attempt to resume the land and privileges which were lost in the Revolution, he could, he was convinced, have arrived in Paris at the head of two millions of peasants. But he would not be the king of the mob: his whole being, he declared, revolted at the thought.

Once, indeed, at Longwood he abandoned himself for a moment to a different dream. "Were I to return," he said, "I should found my empire on the Jacobins. Jacobinism is the volcano which threatens all social order. Its eruption would be easily produced in Prussia, *and by the overthrow of the throne of Berlin I should have given an immense impetus to the power of France. Prussia has always been since the time of Frederick, and will always be, the greatest obstacle to my projects for France.* Once the red cap of liberty supreme at Berlin, all the power of Prussia would be at my disposal. I would use it as a club to smash Russia and Austria. I should resume the natural frontier of France, the Alps and the Rhine; and, having effected that, I should set about the

Digitized by Google

great work of founding the French empire. By my arms and by the force of Jacobinism, by availing myself of every favorable circumstance and conjuncture of events, I should convert Europe into a federation of small sovereigns, over which the French Emperor should be paramount. I should fix its limits at the Niemen: Alexander should only be the Czar of Asiatic Russia. Austria would be only one of three kingdoms—Hungary and Bohemia being the other two—into which I should divide the empire of Maria Theresa. Then Europe would be protected from Russia, and Great Britain would become a second-rate power. Only thus can peace be secured for Europe." Montholon records this strange rhapsody, and declares that it was spoken on March 10, 1819, two years before the Emperor's death. It is very unlike his other estimates of Prussia, or his real views as to Jacobinism. We may take it to be a sort of meditation as to the possibilities of an alternative policy. Possibly, indeed, he may have come to the conviction, after the experience of the Hundred Days, that were he ever again to find himself in France, there was no other way of maintaining himself. He had, however, made an allusion of the same kind to Metternich in their famous interview at Dresden. "It may be that I shall succumb, but if so, I shall drag down with me all other crowns and the whole structure of society itself."

And Talleyrand, with his cold instinct of judgment, had seen at the very outset of the Hundred Days that the one chance for Napoleon was to nationalize the war. His army would not suffice him; he must rely on the party from which he sprang, on the ruins of which he had raised himself, and which

Digitized by Google

he had so long oppressed. Nor was Alexander insensible to the danger. He pointed out to Lord Clancarty that it was necessary to detach the Jacobins from Napoleon, though that would not seem to have been an easy task for a Russian Emperor. Still it is well to note that the clearest and best-informed among the assembled princes at Vienna realized that the one chance for Napoleon was to become again what he had been at the outset of his career—the Revolution incarnate.

Lavallette tells us the truth in one pregnant sentence—the eleven months of the reign of Louis XVIII. had thrown France back into 1792. Even during that short period discontent had crystallized into conspiracies. But their object was to place Louis Philippe as a constitutional monarch on the throne, not to bring back the banished despot. On his return the Emperor was alarmed. He found that the face of Paris was changed—respect and regard for him had visibly waned. Had he realized at Elba, he said, the change which had taken place in France, he would have remained on his island. He would send for Lavallette—sometimes two or three times a day—and would discuss the new situation for hours. Even had he returned victorious, he would, says Lavallette, have had to face great danger from internal troubles. Indeed, it was soon evident that what the country desired was less the return of the Emperor than the departure of the Bourbons. When these had gone, enthusiasm promptly cooled. Napoleon, with characteristic perception, had seen this at once. To a minister who congratulated him on the miracle by which he, almost alone, had reconquered France, he replied, "Bah! the time for compliments is past:

Digitized by Google

they let me come as they let the others go." One instance will perhaps suffice. Napoleon had resumed his former title of Emperor by the Grace of God and the Constitutions of the Empire. This was distasteful to the new spirit, and the council of state replied by proclaiming the sovereignty of the people, a decree not less distasteful to the Emperor, but which he could not resent. He had to put up with slights, and a peremptory insolence from his Chambers. Nevertheless, he faced this new situation with imperturbable calm. He felt, no doubt, that in case of victory he could easily put things right. But in case of defeat? There he saw the new spirit would overwhelm him, unless he could summon a mightier power still to outbid it, and proclaim a new revolution. Why, then, did he not accept the last alternative? Why did he not put himself at the head of an uprising of revolutionary France? Once, no doubt, in earlier days, the personal leadership of a revolution would have been a dazzling object of desire. The First Consul would not have hesitated. But the Emperor saw clearly, we think, that there would in that case have been no question of a dynasty, that the dictatorship would have been a personal one, that he would have been Sylla or Marius, not Augustus or Charlemagne. It will be observed that, in his remark to Montholon, cited above, he says, "I should secure the crown to myself"; there is no mention of, or illusion as to, a succession. Such a position seemed degrading after that which he had filled: and, as we have seen, everything connected with revolution was odious to him. It was, consequently, impossible for him to become the prophet or general of a new Revolution after Waterloo. Had

Digitized by Google

he known what awaited him—St. Helena, its sordid miseries, its petty jailers, its wearisome and hopeless years of living death—he might possibly have overcome his repugnance. But all this he could not foresee; and no less would have moved him; so he preferred to fold his arms and watch the inevitable catastrophe of the rhetoricians; to fold his arms and await events. Better, he thought, the life of an American farmer than the presidency of a committee of public safety.

Between Napoleon and the Chambers there reigned from the first a scarcely disguised hostility. Appearances were to some limited extent maintained. But both parties were playing a part, with little, if any, disguise; and neither was the dupe of the other. The Chambers were willing to use Napoleon as a consummate general to resist invasion and the return of the Bourbons, hoping to be able to subordinate or get rid of him when the victory was won. "As soon as he is gone to the army," said Fouché, "we shall be masters of the situation. I wish him to gain one or two battles. But he will lose the third, and then it will be our turn." This was the complacent calculation of the Chambers. But they were in the position of the mortal in the fairy tale who summons a genie which he cannot control. Napoleon, on the other hand, submitted to the Chambers, as a pledge to the world of his reformed character, and with the hope of obtaining supplies through them, but with the fixed intention of getting rid of them, if he should be victorious. After Ligny he stated categorically his intention of returning to Paris and resuming absolute power when he had defeated the English. Each party was perfectly

Digitized by Google

aware of the policy of the other. There were no doubts and no illusions. It seems certain that the temper of the Parliament was such that many of its members hoped that their arms might be defeated, and were able to rejoice over Waterloo. And it was Napoleon's consciousness of the hostility of the Chambers that compelled his return to Paris after the disaster. He has been blamed for not remaining on the frontier and endeavoring to rally his shattered troops. But of what avail would this have been if behind him his own Parliament were deposing and disavowing him? Yet no one can doubt that these would have been the first acts of the Chambers on hearing of his defeat. Outlawed by all Europe, and by his own country, he could hardly have continued to struggle, even with much greater military forces than any that he could have collected.

This digression leads inevitably to another. The relations of the Emperor and his Parliament are clear and patent. What is more difficult to understand is that, in spite of this last sombre struggle between constitutionalism and Napoleon, his name should have been cherished as a watchword for some thirty years by the Liberals of the Continent. For with liberty and its aspirations he had no sympathy; he relegated them to those whom he contemptuously termed idealogues. Order, justice, force, symmetry, these were his administrative ideals, tempered always by the personal equation. The legend of his liberalism can only be explained by the fact that, the constitution-mongers of 1815 having disappeared on the return of the Bourbons in a storm of contempt, this episode of the Hundred Days was forgotten. All that was remembered was the fact

Digitized by Google

that Napoleon was the child of the Revolution, who had humbled and mutilated the old dynasties of Europe without regard to antiquity, or prescription, or title. To the people he stood for the Revolution, and to the army for glory. No one remembered, or at any rate cared to recall, that he had knowingly ceded his throne and yielded himself a prisoner rather than place himself at the head of a popular insurrection.

But had it been remembered, it would have been held to be expiated by the martyrdom of St. Helena. Napoleon was quite aware of the advantage that his memory and cause would derive from his imprisonment. His death in lonely captivity cancelled all his errors and all his shortcomings. His memory, purged of all recollection of his iron rule, of his insatiable demands on the blood and resources of France, of the two invasions of her territory which he had brought about, became a tradition and a miracle. The peasantry of France had always been, next to the army, his main support, for they had considered him their sure bulwark against any return of feudal rights or feudal lords, against any restitution of the estates confiscated during the Revolution. The peasantry then were the jealous guardians of his fame. Among them long lingered the tradition of his supernatural achievements. Béranger, it has been remarked, was able to condense the popular conception in the narrative of an old peasant woman who does not mention a single one of his victories.

"Long, long," says the poet in that exquisite piece, "will they talk of his glory under the thatched roof; in fifty years the humble dwelling will know no other history." And he goes on to give the key-note in a

Digitized by Google

couplet. "Children, through this village I saw him ride, followed by kings."

It is too much to say, perhaps, that Napoleon received the honors of apotheosis, but short of that point it is difficult to exaggerate. He received, at any rate, the most singular and sublime honor that has ever been awarded to humanity. For he was known in France not as General, or Consul, or Emperor, or even by his name, but simply as "The Man" (*l'Homme*). His son was "the Son of the Man"; he himself was always "The Man." He was, in fact, the Man of the popular imagination, and it was thus that Liberals swore by him. His intense individuality, even more than his horror of anarchy, had made him an absolute ruler. But as the product of the Revolution, as the humbler of kings, a glamour of liberty grew round his name. He had gratified the passion for equality by founding the fourth dynasty, though sprung from nothing; he had kept out the Bourbons; he had, above all, crushed and abased the chiefs of that Holy Alliance which weighed so heavily on Europe, which endeavored to tread out the last embers of the French Revolution, and which represented an embodied hostility to freedom. So regarded, it is not wonderful that the image of Napoleon became the idol of Continental Liberalism. Later on, again, it was stamped on a more definite plan. Authoritative democracy, or, in other words, democratic dictatorship, the idea which produced the Second Empire in France, which is still alive there, and which, in various forms, has found favor elsewhere, is the political legacy, perhaps the final message, of Napoleon.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVI

THE END

IT is unnecessary to dwell further on these last scenes or glimpses of the great drama of Napoleon's life. It is strange, however, to note that, in spite of the atmosphere of vigilance in which he lived, the end was unexpected. His death came suddenly. This we gather from the scanty record of Arnott; for Antommarchi we put, for reasons already explained, entirely on one side. Arnott was evidently unaware of his patient's grave condition. Though he was called in on April 1st, only thirty-five days before Napoleon's death, he did not then, or for some time afterwards, suspect the gravity of the illness. Indeed, it was not till April 27th or 28th, a bare week before the end, that he realized that the malady was mortal. Nor had the governor or the British government any suspicion that the end was near.

For the last nine days of his life he was constantly delirious. On the morning of May 5th he uttered some incoherent words, among which Montholon fancied that he distinguished, "*France . . . armée . . . tête d'armée.*"* As the patient uttered these words

*Antommarchi, characteristically enough, states that three hours afterwards he heard Napoleon say "*tête . . . armée*" and that these were his last words. Montholon expressly states that Antommarchi was not in the room at two o'clock when Napoleon said

Digitized by Google

he sprang from the bed, dragging Montholon, who endeavored to restrain him, on the floor. It was the last effort of that formidable energy. He was with difficulty replaced in bed by Montholon and Archambault, and then lay quietly till near six o'clock in the evening, when he yielded his last breath. A great storm was raging outside, which shook the frail huts of the soldiers as with an earthquake, tore up the trees that the Emperor had planted, and uprooted the willow under which he was accustomed to repose. Within, the faithful Marchand was covering the corpse with the cloak which the young conqueror had worn at Marengo.

The governor and his staff were waiting below to hear the last news. On learning the event Lowe spoke a few manly and fitting words. But the inevitable wrangling soon broke out again over the corpse. Lowe insisted on an immediate autopsy, which the French strenuously resisted. He also declined to allow the removal of the remains to France. Here, he had no choice. The unexpected arrival of the dead Napoleon in Europe would have been second only in embarrassment to the arrival of the living. Lastly, as we have seen, he insisted that the name "Bonaparte" should be appended if "Napoleon," as was proposed, were engraved on the coffin. Comment on this is superfluous.

During the next morning the body lay in state, and Montchenu obtained his only view of the captive. Four days afterwards the funeral took place with such simple pomp as the island could afford. The

"tête d'armée." The point is of little importance except as showing to the very last the difficulty of ascertaining the exact truth at Longwood.

Digitized by Google

coffin, on which lay the sword and the mantle of Marengo, was borne by British soldiers to a car drawn by four of the Emperor's horses, and thence again by relays of British soldiers to a spot which he had himself chosen, should burial in France be refused. It was in a garden at the bottom of a deep ravine. There, under the shade of two willows, by the side of a spring which had supplied the Emperor with water to drink, had the grave been dug. The inmates of Longwood followed as chief mourners. Then came Lowe, Montchenu, and the officials, civil, naval, and military, of the island. As the body was lowered into the earth there were salvoes of musketry and cannon.

Nineteen years afterwards a French frigate, under the command of the Prince of Joinville, anchored at Jamestown. It had come for the purpose of conveying back to France the Emperor's remains. They had been surrendered in the hope expressed by the British government that the last traces of national animosity would be buried in the tomb of Napoleon. But before the vessel had returned with her precious burden the two countries were on the very brink of war. In the *Belle-Poule* there returned on this last pious pilgrimage to St. Helena Bertrand and Gourgaud, the young Las Cases, and Arthur Bertrand ("the first French visitor who entered St. Helena without Lord Bathurst's permission"). There, too, were Marchand, the most faithful and trusted of the Emperor's attendants, Noverraz, Pierron, and Archambault, as well as St. Denis, who, disguised under the name of Ali, had acted as second Mameluke with Rustan, and whom Napoleon had often used as an amanuensis at St. Helena. Together these sombre

Digitized by Google

and devoted survivors visited the scene of their exile, and amid the shame and embarrassment of the British authorities, witnessed the degradation of Longwood into a stable. Together they surrounded their master's grave at midnight on October 15, 1840 (the twenty-fifth anniversary of his arrival at St. Helena), and when, after ten hours' strenuous labor, the coffin was disinterred, they beheld once more the features of the Emperor, unaltered and unimpaired. Together they followed the corpse in a procession which savored less of a funeral than a triumph to Paris. It was then that the dead conqueror made the most majestic of his entrances into his capital. On a bitter December morning the King of the French, surrounded by the princes and ministers and splendors of France, sat in silent state under the dome of the Invalides, awaiting the arrival of the corpse. Suddenly a chamberlain appearing at the door announced, in a clear and resonant voice, "*l'Empereur*," as if it were the living sovereign, and the vast and illustrious assembly rose with a common emotion as the body was borne slowly in. The spectators could not restrain their tears as they realized the pathos and significance of the scene. Behind the coffin walked the surviving exiles of St. Helena; it was the undisputed privilege of Bertrand to lay his master's sword upon the pall.

One point in the Emperor's last illness should be noticed once for all. The policy of Longwood, actively supported by O'Meara, was to declare that there was a deadly liver complaint, indigenous to the island, to which Napoleon was a victim, and which could, of course, only be cured by his removal. We think that the Emperor himself, who combined a

Digitized by Google

shrewd interest with a rooted disbelief in the art of medicine, knew better. He would, for example, put his hand on the pit of his stomach, and say, with a groan, "*Oh, mon pylore! mon pylore!*" He, however, as we have seen, gravely condoled with Gourgaud, who was in the best of health, on being another victim of this insular malady. Within two months of his own death he wrote to Pauline that the "liver complaint with which he has been afflicted for six years, and which is endemic and mortal at St. Helena, has made alarming progress during the last six months." Within a month of his death he made the same complaint to Arnott. Montholon, on his return to Europe, in spite of the *post-mortem* examination, still gallantly maintained the theory of a liver complaint. But Napoleon's liver was found to be quite sound; he died of the cancer in the stomach which had killed his father.

His last days, before the agony began, were tragical enough, as we gather from the jejune chronicles of Montholon. Even these records do not give the impression of having been written from day to day, but retrospectively, perhaps from notes. Bertrand, in a letter to King Joseph, says that after August, 1820, the Emperor remained almost always in his chair, and in his dressing-gown, able to read and talk, but not to work or dictate. He and his suite would sometimes build castles in the air of a new life in America, but he well knew that he was dying. He devoted much time to his will, and was extremely anxious that the collection of letters from European sovereigns to himself, as well as a few that Mme. de Staël had written to him from Italy, should be published. On this point he was strenuous and in-

Digitized by Google

sistent. He believed them to be in the hands of Joseph. But they had been stolen, and had been offered to and refused by Murray the publisher. The Russian government had intervened and purchased, for a large sum, the letters of Alexander: the fate of the others is not known. He would still read aloud, and would still discuss the past. But it is strange how little we know of it all, and we infer that Napoleon's suite were as much in the dark as the rest of the world with regard to their master's approaching end. Otherwise, they would surely have recorded with pious care these remarkable moments.

It is these last moments that we chiefly grudge to oblivion. Otherwise, one may well ask: what is the use of recalling these sere records of the captivity of St. Helena? They can scarcely be called history; they are not, unhappily, romance; they can hardly be held to possess any healthy attraction. They only narrate, with obtrusive inaccuracy, an episode which no one has any interest in remembering, and which all would fain forget. Why, then, collate these morbid, sordid, insincere chronicles? Does not history tell us that there is nothing so melancholy as the aspect of great men in retirement, from Nebuchadnezzar in his meadow to Napoleon on his rock?

The first answer to this question is incidental and personal. To the present writer Lord Beaconsfield once explained why he wrote *Count Alarcos*, a drama nearly, if not quite, forgotten. It was produced, he said, not in the hope of composing a great tragedy, but of laying a literary ghost. The story haunted him, and would, he felt, haunt him until he

Digitized by Google

should have put it into shape. And so it is with this little book. It cannot help embodying a tragedy, but it was written to lay a literary ghost, dormant for years, only quickened into activity by the analysis of Gourgaud's last journals, and by stimulating leisure.

Secondly, it is an episode on which History has yet to record her final judgment. Nor is it clear that she is yet in a position to do so. The actors, indeed, have long passed away; the blood heated by twenty years of warfare is now cold enough; on the one side the faint inextinguishable hopes, on the other the apprehensions and the suspicions, all are dead. And yet—the subject still seems warm. It is doubtful if one side is yet cool enough to own any error; it is doubtful if the other side has wholly forgiven. Nations have silent, stubborn memories. The fires of Smithfield have left in England embers that still smoulder. Ireland has remembered much which it would be for her own happiness to forget. The Scots are still Jacobites at heart.

Again, we have more chance of seeing the *man* Napoleon at St. Helena than at any other period of his career. In the first years of the consulate the man was revealed, but then he was undeveloped. On the throne he ceased to be human. At Elba he had no present existence; he was always in the past or the future.

And, again, what was published about him during his life, and for long after his death, has little value. A sure test of great men of action is the absence of lukewarmness with regard to them. They are detested or adored. The idolatry and hatred which Napoleon inspired survived him too long to allow of the

Digitized by Google

play of reason. No one seemed able then, or for long afterwards, to put on a pair of smoked glasses and gaze dispassionately at this dazzling luminary. Nor is it easy now. One has to sift evidence and passion, and make allowance for it all. His correspondence, especially that part which was suppressed, furnishes, of course, the great picture of his manifold activities and methods. This is, however, but a small fraction of the literature which concerns him. Of books and memoirs about Napoleon there is indeed no end. Of reliable books, which give a sure, or even remotely impartial, picture of the man, there are remarkably few.

Some judicious observers, who knew Napoleon well, wrote their real impressions, but wrote them very secretly, and the result is only now oozing out. Of these witnesses we incline to put Chaptal first. He was for some time Napoleon's confidential minister, and he analyzes his character with the dispassionate science of an eminent chemist. Pasquier we are inclined to place next, as being on the whole unfavorably fair. With him we should perhaps bracket Ségur, whose memoirs, which include the classical history of the Russian expedition, give a brilliant portrait, the work of an admirer, but by no means a blind admirer. We should put it as a pendant to that of Pasquier, and say that it is favorably fair. And the beauty of the style, the exquisite eloquence of some of the passages, would lure on the sternest and sourest critics of the hero. Lavallette, though he does not tell us much, and though the Duke of Wellington, on the slightest grounds, stigmatized him as a liar, seems sufficiently reliable, on the partial side. Roederer, from among a number of massive volumes contain-

Digitized by Google

ing his unreadable works, yields some pure gold, priceless notes of Napoleonic conversation. Mme. de Rémusat, with heavy deductions, leaves something of value. But we can never forget that she burned her real, contemporary memoirs in 1815, and that those now published were composed three years afterwards, during the bitterest reaction of the Restoration, when it was considered indecent to allude to the Emperor, much less pronounce his name, in polite society. Moreover, she was the close friend of Talleyrand, Napoleon's unremitting enemy; was lady-in-waiting to Josephine, whose wrongs she resented; and, worst of all, was a woman who could not forgive Napoleon's clumsiness and deficiencies as a lady's man. On a lower scale we may mention Méneval and Beausset. On a lower still there is Constant. Constant (the valet, not Benjamin) gives many details of interest, though the memoirs which bear his name were probably written by another hand from his notes. To him, in despite of the proverb, his master was a hero. We place some confidence in Miot de Melito, and in the dry humor of Beugnot. Nor do we desire to disparage the authors, some of them conspicuous, whom we do not name; we only desire to indicate those who seem most worthy of confidence. Scores of memoirs throw here and there a flash of light on the man. But the light is usually accidental, as the writers are generally idolaters or enemies. To Marbot and Thiebault we owe the most vivid snap-shots of Napoleon. The extraordinary life-like scene of Napoleon at the masked ball mopping his hot head with a wet handkerchief, and murmuring, *"Oh! que c'est bon, que c'est bon!"* is recorded by Marbot. The fleeting vision of Napoleon

Digitized by Google

galloping homewards through Spain alone with an aide-de-camp, whose horse the Emperor is flogging with a postilion's whip, is the little masterpiece of Thiebault. We wish we felt sure of the conscientious accuracy of either author.

At length, in this final phase, we have some chance of seeing something of the man. The artifice and drapery still encompass him, but not always; and through the perplexed and adulatory narratives there come glimpses of light. From one there even comes illumination. Had Gourgaud remained till the end, it is scarcely too much to say that we should have known from him more of the naked Napoleon than from all the existing library of Napoleonic literature. But Gougaud leaves before we most require him. The remaining records tell us little or nothing of that period when there may have been in all probability most to be learned—at that supreme opportunity for self-revelation when the vanities and passions of life were paling before the infinite shadow of death. It was then that, left alone with history and with eternity, the *man*, as apart from the warrior and statesman, might possibly, but not probably, have revealed himself, and confessed himself, and spoken what truth was in him. Indeed, the declaration about the Duc d'Enghien's death, made five weeks before his own, shows that the dying man did assert himself with passionate impatience to clear others and to tell the truth.

But, even without the last revelations, which he may have made, but which we have not got, it is to St. Helena that the world must look for the final glimpse of this great human problem. For a problem he is, and must ever remain. Mankind will always

Digitized by Google

delight to scrutinize something that indefinitely raises its conception of its own powers and possibilities. For this reason it loves balloons and flying machines, apparatus that moves below earth or sea, the men who accomplish physical or intellectual feats which enlarge the scope of human achievement. For this reason also it seeks, but eternally in vain, to penetrate the secret of this prodigious human being. In spite of all this delving, mining, and analysis, what secret there is will probably evade discovery. Partly, it may be argued, because it is so complex. Partly, it may be contended, because there is none: there are only the play and procession of destiny.

As to the complexity of the problem, as to the variety of the man, there can be no doubt. But the study, even if illusory, will always remain absorbing. There will always be alchemists, and always investigators of Napoleon's character. Nor can this be considered surprising. He is so multifarious, luminous, and brilliant that he gives light from a thousand facets. Sometimes he invents, sometimes he talks something perilously like nonsense; sometimes he is petty, theatrical, or outrageous, but in the main, where you get at the man himself, he is intensely human and profoundly interesting. Study, then, of Napoleon's utterances, apart from any attempt to discover the secret of his prodigious exploits, cannot be considered as lost time: whether it be pursued with the view of imitating, or avoiding, or simply of learning, it can scarcely fail to be stimulating. His career, partly perhaps because it is not scientifically divided into acts or phases, gives rise to a number of questions, all obvious and pertinent, but seldom admitting of a direct or satisfactory reply.

Digitized by Google

What was his conception of life? What was his fixed object? Had he any such deliberate conception or object? Was he always sane? Was he in any degree a charlatan? Was he simply a lucky fatalist of vast natural powers? Or was his success due to the most remarkable combination of intellect and energy that stands on exact record?

To all these questions, and scores of others, many capable men will be ready with a prompt reply. But the more the student examines the subject, the less ready will he be with an answer. He may at last arrive at his own hypothesis, but it will not be a confident one; and he will find, without surprise, that his fellows, equally laborious and equally conscientious, will all supply excellent solutions, totally at variance with his own and with each other.

By the philosopher, and still more by the philosopher who believes in the divine guidance of human affairs, the true relation of Napoleon to the world's history will be reduced to a very simple conception: that he was launched into the world as a great natural or supernatural force, as a scourge and a scavenger, to effect a vast operation, partly positive, but mainly negative; and that when he has accomplished that work he is withdrawn as swiftly as he came. Cæsar, Attila, Tamerlane, and Mahomet are forces of this kind; the last a much more potent and abiding factor in the universe than Napoleon; another proof, if proof were needed, of how small is the permanent effect of warfare alone on the history of mankind. These men make great epochs; they embody vast transitions; they perplex and appall their contemporaries; but when viewed at a distance, they are seen to be periodical and necessary incidents of the

Digitized by Google

world's movement. The details of their career, their morals, their methods, are then judged, interesting though they may be, to be merely subordinate details.

Scavenger is a coarse word, yet it accurately represents Napoleon's first function as ruler. The volcano of the French Revolution had burned itself out. He had to clear away the cold lava; the rubbish of past destruction; the cinders and the scoriæ; the fungus of corruption which had overgrown all, and was for the moment the only visible result. What he often said of the crown of France is absolutely true of its government. "I found it in the gutter, and I picked it up on my sword's point." The gutter government he replaced by a new administrative machine, trim, pervading, and efficient; efficient, that is to say, so long as the engineer was a man of extraordinary energy and genius.

Then he is a scourge. He purges the floor of Europe with fire. As the sword and spirit of the Revolution, though in all the pomp of the purple, he visits the ancient monarchies, and compels them to set their houses in order. True, after his fall, they relapse. But it is only for a space, and reform, if not revolt, is soon busy among them. Had it not been for Napoleon this could not have happened; for, when he assumed the government, Europe seemed at last to have stemmed the Revolution.

We do not discuss his military greatness; that is universally acknowledged. It would, moreover, require an expert and a volume to discuss it with authority. To the civilian eye he seems, at his best, the greatest of all soldiers. His rapidity of movement and apprehension, his power of inspiring his armies to perform extraordinary feats, his knowledge

Digitized by Google

of detail combined with his gigantic grasp, his prodigious triumphs, make cool judgment difficult. Later on, even civilians may see faults—the grand army, for example, becoming, before it struck a blow, little more than a mob, without discipline and without provisions, for want of practical foresight and commissariat. There is a disposition, too—perhaps a growing one—to attribute a larger share of credit to his lieutenants for some of his great victories; to Desaix, for instance, at Marengo; to Davoust for Jena. But, let what will be subtracted, there remains an irreducible maximum of fame and exploit. After all, the mass of mankind can only judge of results. And, though there may be no one achievement equal to Cæsar's victory at Alesia, the military genius of Napoleon in its results is unsurpassed.

We do not, of course, imply that the negative and warrior work of Napoleon, immense though it was, represents anything like his whole career. He was a great administrator. He controlled every wheel and spring, large or small, of his vast machinery of government. It was, as it were, his plaything. He was his own War Office, his own Foreign Office, his own Admiralty, his own ministry of every kind. His minister of police, when he was Fouché, had no doubt a department of some independence; but then Napoleon had half a dozen police agencies of his own. His financial management, by which he sustained a vast empire with power and splendor, but with rigid economy, and without a debt, is a marvel and a mystery. In all the offices of state he knew everything, guided everything, inspired everything. He himself aptly enough compared his mind to a cupboard of pigeon-holes; to deal with any subject he

Digitized by Google

opened the pigeon-hole relating to it and closed the others; when he wished to sleep he closed them all. Moreover, his inexhaustible memory made him familiar with all the men and all the details, as well as with all the machinery, of government. Daru, one of Napoleon's most efficient ministers, told Lamarque a curious story which illustrates the Emperor's unflagging vigilance of administration. One day, in the Eylau campaign, Daru left the Emperor, saying that he had to open his letters. "What letters can you receive," asked the Emperor, derisively, "in this Arab camp, where we live on the country as we march?" "Your Majesty shall see," replied Daru, and in a short time returned, followed by half a dozen secretaries laden with papers. Napoleon opened the first at hazard; it contained a demand from the hospital at Mayence for a hundred syringes. "What! Do you provide syringes for the hospital at Mayence?" "Yes, and Your Majesty pays for them." The Emperor spent four hours opening and reading all the letters; he continued to do so for eight successive days; then he said: "For the first time I understand the mechanism of an army." On his return to Paris after Tilsit he pursued the same course with all the other ministers successively. After this process, which lasted six weeks, he carried a similar investigation into the ranks of the subordinates. What a force in itself was this quick yet laborious apprehension, this detailed probing of his vast administration! The inherent defect of such an executive was that no less an energy or intellect could have kept it going for a week. So completely did it depend on the master that it was paralyzed by the least severance from him. The conspiracy of Mal-

Digitized by Google

let, in 1812, and the conduct of affairs by the council of regency, in 1814, are eminent instances of this.

Then he was a great legislator. The positive and permanent part of his work is, of course, the Code. Wars end, and conquests shrink—so much so, that Napoleon, after all, left France less than he found it. Indeed, the only trace of his reign now visible on the face of Europe is the Bernadotte dynasty in Sweden, which was not the direct result of conquest, or, indeed, the direct work of Napoleon. All that of this kind he planned and fashioned passed away with him. But the Code remains, and profoundly affects the character of the nation, as well as of the other races to which it has been extended. Few enactments, for example, have had a more potent effect in moulding the social and political life of a community than the provision of the Code for the compulsory division of property. It checks population, it enforces equality, it constitutes the most powerful and conservative of landed interests.

To achieve such work required a puissant organization, and, indeed, his physical constitution was not less remarkable than his intellectual mechanism. His digestion endured for a life-time, without resentment, hearty meals devoured in a few moments at odd times. His first tooth was extracted at St. Helena, and then, it appears, unnecessarily. But this operation was the only one that he ever underwent. It appeared in other ways that his exceptional mind was lodged in an exceptional body. In his prime, before his passion for hot baths had weakened him, he was incapable of fatigue. He fought Alvinzy once for five consecutive days without taking off his boots or closing his eyes; when he had beaten the

Digitized by Google

Austrian he slept for thirty-six hours. On arriving at the Tuileries after his breathless journey from Valladolid, when he had only paused for a few hours at Bayonne, he insisted on at once inspecting, without an instant's delay, the entire palace, and the Louvre, where new constructions were proceeding. He would post from Poland to Paris, summon a council at once, and preside at it with his usual vigor and acuteness. And his councils were no joke. They would last eight or ten hours. Once, at two o'clock in the morning, the councillors were all worn out; the Minister of Marine was fast asleep; Napoleon still urged them to further deliberation: "Come, gentlemen, pull yourselves together; it is only two o'clock; we must earn the money that the nation gives us." Throughout these sittings his mind was always active and predominant. Never did a council separate without being the wiser, either from what he taught or from the close investigation which he insisted upon. He would work for eighteen hours at a stretch, sometimes at one subject, sometimes at a variety. Never, says Roederer, have I seen his mind weary; never have I seen his mind without its spring; not in strain of body, or wrath, or the most violent exercise.

Sometimes he carried physical force to an extreme point. He kicked Volney in the stomach for saying that France wanted the Bourbons, and the philosopher was carried away senseless. On another occasion he knocked down his chief justice and belabored him with his fists. He is said to have attacked Berthier with the tongs. These were the rare eruptions of a nervous system occasionally yielding to continuous strain. Nor was the primitive Corsican altogether smothered under the robe of empire.

Digitized by Google

Again, there were reactions. Witness that strange scene at the little mansion of Düben, where he sits for two days on a sofa, heedless of the despatches which are massed on his table calling for a reply, engaged in vacantly tracing capital letters on sheets of paper, in a prostration of doubt whether he shall march on Leipsic or Berlin. Witness the apathy at Malmaison after Waterloo.

One other positive result, which is in truth scarcely less substantial than the Code, may be laid to his account. He has left behind the memory of a period of splendor and dominion, which, even if it does not keep the imagination of his people in a perpetual glow, remains a symbol, as monumental and visible as the tomb in the Invalides, to stimulate the national ambition. The terrible sacrifices which he exacted are forgotten, and, if they be remembered, compare not unfavorably (on paper, at all events) with those entailed by the modern system, even in time of peace, without foreign supremacy or the empire of the West to be placed to the credit side. And so they may obliterate the eagles and the initials if they will; it avails nothing. France, in chill moments of disaster, or of even of mere material and commercial well-being, will turn and warm herself at the glories of Napoleon. The atmosphere is still imbued with the light and heat of the imperial era, with the blaze of his victories, and with the lustre of those years when Europe was the anvil for the hammer of France.

The details of method and morals are, in cases like Napoleon's, as we have said, subordinate matters—subordinate, that is, for History, which only concerns itself with his effect and result. But, none the less, they are profoundly interesting for mankind.

Digitized by Google

They will not, indeed, enable us to discover his secret. We study them as we would the least facts concerning a supernatural visitant, a good or bad spirit, something alien to ourselves, and yet linked to ourselves by the bond of humanity—not merely human shape and human utterance, but human failing and human depravity.

What, after all, is the story?

Into a career of a score of years he crowded his own dazzling career, his conquests, his triumphant assault on the Old World. In that brief space we see the lean, hungry conqueror swell into the sovereign, and then into the sovereign of sovereigns. Then comes the catastrophe. He loses the balance of his judgment and becomes a curse to his own country, and to all others. He cannot be still himself, or give mankind an instant of repose. His neighbors' landmarks become playthings to him; he cannot leave them alone; he manipulates them for the mere love of moving them. His island enemy is on his nerves; he sees her everywhere; he strikes at her blindly and wildly. And so he produces universal unrest, universal hostility, the universal sense of his incompatibility with all established society. But he pursues his path as if possessed, as if driven by the inward sting of some burning devil. He has ceased to be sane. The intellect and energy are still there, but, as it were, in caricature; they have become monstrosities. Body and mind are affected by the prolonged strain to be more than mortal. Then there is the inevitable collapse; and at St. Helena we are watching, with curious compassion, the reaction and decline.

The truth we take to be this. The mind of man

Digitized by Google

has not in it sufficient ballast to enable it to exercise, or endure for long, supreme uncontrolled power. Or, to put it in other words, the human frame is unequal to anything approaching omnipotence. All history, from the Cæsars onward, teaches us this. Strong as was the intellect of Napoleon, it formed no exception to the rule.

For in the first period of his consulate he was an almost ideal ruler. He was firm, sagacious, far-seeing, energetic, just. He was, moreover, what is not of less importance, ready and anxious to learn. He was, indeed, conscious of extreme ignorance on the civil side of his administration. But he was never ashamed to ask the meaning of the simplest word or the most elementary procedure; and he never asked twice. He thus acquired and assimilated all necessary information with extraordinary rapidity. But when he had learned all that his councillors could teach him, he realized his immeasurable superiority to all men with whom he had been brought into contact. He arrived at the conclusion—probably a just one—that his genius was as unfailing and supreme in the art of statesmanship as in the art of war, and that he was as much the first ruler as the first captain of the world. That discovery, or conviction, backed by the forces and resources of France, inspired him with an ambition, at first vague, but growing as it was fed; at last immeasurable and impossible. Nothing seemed impracticable, nothing illusory. Why should it? He had never failed, except, perhaps, at Acre. He beheld around him incapable monarchs, incapable generals, incapable ministers, the languid barriers of a crumbling society. There seemed nothing in the world to

Digitized by Google

check a second Alexander, even one more reckless and enterprising than he whose career had inspired his own boyish dreams.

Had he proceeded more slowly, had he taken time to realize and consolidate his acquisitions, it is difficult to limit the extent to which his views might have been realized. But the edifice of his empire was so prodigiously successful that he would not pause, even a moment, to allow the cement to harden. And, as he piled structure on structure, it became evident that he had ceased to consider its base. That base was France, capable of heroic effort and endurance, of all, indeed, but the impossible. The limit at last was reached. Great as were her resources, she could no longer supply the reckless demands of her ruler. In 1812 he left three hundred thousand Frenchmen amid the snows of Russia. In 1813 he summoned one million three hundred thousand more under arms. And these were only the culminating figures of a long series of overdrafts, anticipations of the annual conscription, terrible drains on the population of France proper—a population of some thirty millions.

He, no doubt, had convinced himself, with that faculty of self-persuasion which is at once the weakness and the strength of extraordinary minds, that he had in reality enlarged his foundation; that it had increased in exact proportion to the increase of his dominions; that the Germans and Italians and Dutchmen and Spaniards who served under his banners formed a solid accretion to it; that his empire rested on a homogeneous mass of eighty millions of equally loyal subjects. He seemed to consider that each annexation, however procured, added as many valid

Digitized by Google

instruments of his policy as it did human beings to his realm. It added, as a rule, nothing but veiled discontent and expectant revolt. Frederick the Great was wont, it is true, to compel the prisoners whom he captured in battle to serve in his ranks. But he was under no illusions as to the zeal and fidelity of these reluctant recruits. Napoleon, however, considered, or professed to consider, that the populations that he had conquered could be relied upon as subjects and soldiers. This strange hallucination indicated the loss of his judgment, and, more than any other cause, brought about his fall.

Whom God wishes to destroy, says the adage, He first deprives of sanity. And so we see Napoleon, with incredible self-delusion, want of insight, or both, preparing his own destruction by dealing with men as if they were checkers, and moving them about the board according to his own momentary whim, without a thought of their passions, or character, or traditions; in a word, by ignoring human nature. Take, for one example, the singular apportionment of souls, in a despatch of February 15, 1810: "I approve of this report with the following modifications: 1. Only to take from the Italian Tyrol two hundred and eighty thousand souls, a population equal to that of Bayreuth and Ratisbon. 2. That Bavaria should only give up for the Kingdom of Wurtemburg and the Duchies of Baden and Darmstadt a population of one hundred and fifty thousand souls. So that, instead of one hundred and eighty-eight thousand souls, Bavaria should gain two hundred and forty thousand or two hundred and fifty thousand. Out of the one hundred and fifty thousand souls ceded by Bavaria, I think one must give one

Digitized by Google

hundred and ten thousand to Wurtemburg, twenty-five thousand to Baden, and fifteen thousand to Darmstadt." It is only fair to add that the congress of his enemies at Vienna proceeded, with flattering imitation, on the same principles.

But the exasperation of the transferred and re-transferred souls was not the only result of this mania for cutting and carving. It produced a moral effect which was disastrous to the new empire. The founder of such a dynasty should have attempted to convince the world of the stability of his arrangements. He himself, however, spared no exertion to prove the contrary. Moving boundaries, shifting realms, giving and taking back, changing, revising, and reversing, he seemed to have set before himself the object of demonstrating that his foundations were never fixed, that nothing in his structure was definite or permanent. It was the suicide of system. His bitterest enemies could hardly have hoped to suggest that conquests so dazzling were transient and insecure, had he not taken such infinite pains to prove it himself.

Austria and Prussia he had conquered; Spain and Italy he had annexed; he reckoned these, therefore, as submissive auxiliaries. Russia he had both defeated and cajoled; so all was at his feet. He never seems to have given a thought to the storm of undying hatred, rancor, and revenge that was chafing and raging below.

He added a Spanish contingent to his grand army, when the Spaniards were cutting the throat of every Frenchman whom they could find. He added a Prussian contingent, when he must have known, had he been sane, that no Prussians could ever forgive

Digitized by Google

him the humiliations which he had heaped upon their country. He added an Austrian contingent at a time when a much less clear-sighted observer must have been aware that it was merely a corps of hostile observation.

Supreme power, then, destroyed the balance of his judgment and common-sense, and so brought about his fall. But it was not the only cause. There was another factor. He was deeply imbued with the passion of warfare. It is difficult to realize the full strength of this fascination, for, though all soldiers feel the fever of the field, it is rarely given in all the countless generations of the world to experience it in its full strength, as one who enjoys, as absolute ruler, the sole direction, responsibility, and hazard of great wars. But if common men love to risk chances in the lottery or with the dice, on the race-course or the stock exchange, if there they can find the sting of excitement, war is the gambling of the gods. The haunting risk of disaster; the unspeakable elation of victory; the gigantic vicissitude of triumph and defeat; the tumult and frenzy and divine sweat; the very scorn of humanity and all that touches it, life and property and happiness, the anguish of the dying, the horror of the dead—all these sublimated passions not merely seem to raise man for a moment beyond his fellows, but constitute a strain which human nerves are not able long to endure. And Napoleon's character was profoundly affected by the gambling of warfare. The star of his destiny, which bulked so largely in his mind, was but the luck of the gambler on a vast scale. He had indeed his full measure of the gross and petty superstition which ordinarily accompa-

Digitized by Google

nies the vice. And so, even in his most desperate straits, he cannot bring himself to close the account and sign a peace; for he always cherishes the gambler's hope that fortune, or the star of destiny, or whatever it be called, may yet produce another transformation, and restore all his losses by a sudden stroke.

Generals, as a rule, are, fortunately, controlled by governments in matters of policy. But when the supreme captain is also the supreme ruler, there is nothing to restrain him from the awful hazard: he stakes once too often, and ruins his country, having already lost himself. Charles XII. was often in the mind and on the lips of Napoleon during the Russian campaign.

Of scarcely any sovereign warrior but Frederick can it be said that he sheathed the sword at the right time, and voluntarily kept it in the scabbard. But his case was peculiar. He had had terrible lessons. He had been within an ace of ruin and suicide. No conqueror had ever seen so much of the horrors of defeat. There are not many examples in history of annihilation so complete as that of Kunersdorf: there are few indeed of triumphant resuscitation after such a disaster. And when Frederick had recovered the material waste and loss of his long war, his blood had cooled; he had the good fortune to have passed, and, what was more important, to know that he had passed, that season of war in the life of man which Napoleon defined. So he consolidated his conquests and died in peace.

Napoleon sometimes spoke lightly of him as a general when at St. Helena. We doubt, however, if he thought lightly of Frederick as a man. Fred-

Digitized by Google

erick had been his immediate prototype. Had Frederick never lived, Napoleon might have had a different career. And indeed, as it was, he might have learned other lessons from the Prussian king; for Frederick, though inferior to Napoleon in all else, in force and scope and scale, was his superior in two respects. Had Napoleon possessed the astute moderation and the desperate tenacity of Frederick, the destinies of France and of Europe would have taken a different turn.

We hold, then, that the Emperor had lost the balance of his faculties long before he finally fell. But this is not to say that he was mad; except, perhaps, in the sense of Juvenal's bitter apostrophe to Hannibal. Sanity is a relative term. Napoleon at his outset was phenomenally sane. His cool, calculating shrewdness and his intense common-sense were at least in proportion to his vast, but still bounded, ambition. From such singular sanity to the limits of insanity there is an immeasurable distance. Napoleon's impaired sanity was superior to the judgment of the vast majority of mankind; but —here lay the fatal change—it had ceased to bear any proportion to, or exercise any control over, his ambition. When that check was removed he was a lost man.

At what precise period the overbalancing of this great intellect took place it is of course impossible to say, for the process was of necessity gradual and almost imperceptible. Some may incline to think that it was apparent even before he became Emperor; that the lawless abduction and wanton execution of Enghien may mark the beginning. That proceeding, no doubt, denotes not merely a criminal

Digitized by Google

lawlessness, but an irritability, a want of decency and control, a recklessness of cause and effect which were new in Napoleon. Some may surmise that there is a visible alteration after Wagram. That period seems too late; though he was then standing on a pinnacle, from which he saw all the kingdoms of the earth spread out before him—a pinnacle, lofty and sublime, but with a foothold both giddy and insecure. Any attempt, however, to fix exact dates for a psychological change would need a volume in itself. It is sufficient for our purpose to point out that the alteration did occur, and that the Napoleon of 1810, for example, was a very different being to the Napoleon of 1801. The Napoleon who declared at one time that all the countries of Europe should keep their archives in Paris, and at another that the French empire would become the mother country of all sovereignties, that all the kings of the earth should have palaces of residence in Paris, and attend in state the coronations of the French Emperors; the Napoleon who refused to make peace in 1813 and 1814, had obviously lost the balance of his reason. So obvious was this that, in the last days of his first reign, there was a conspiracy in Paris to dethrone him on the ground of insanity. It is easy, too, to pronounce with absolute certainty that the loss of balance and soundness had occurred at Bayonne in 1808, and on the Niemen in 1812. He had then ceased to calculate coolly, and to see any bounds—moral, physical, or international—to any freak of ambition which might occur to him. In the Russian campaign there is visible a feverish, reckless desire to strain his fortune to the utmost, to push his luck, as gamblers say, and to test, as it

Digitized by Google

were, the extreme limits of his destiny. He himself said of the Treaty of Leoben that he had played at *vingt-et-un* and stopped at twenty. Later in life he demanded twenty-one at every coup.

And in another way this overbalanced, overweening individuality contributed to his fall. He had no check or assistance from advice, for his ministers were ciphers. It is not too much to say that the blind idolatry of Bassano had much to do with the imperial catastrophe. Great responsibility, too, is attributed to the compliance and deference of Berthier. Napoleon was apparently safe from all rivalry. But yet he could not endure that there should be approved merit or commanding ability near him to share the lustre of his government. That government, indeed, was so conducted as to render it impossible for men of independent ability to serve under it. For such an administration mediocrity was a necessity, and high capacity an embarrassing superfluity. Had he died suddenly, he would have left behind him a vast number of trained subordinates and a few brilliant malcontents. In itself this fact sufficiently proves the weakness of his government, without taking into account its morbid centralization. His system, putting his impracticable ambition on one side, must have brought the empire to ruin at his death, unless he had been able, which for a man of his temperament was in the last degree improbable, to make a complete change, and fashion a new system which would give ability fair play and which might exist without himself. Some young men of promise, such as Molé and Pasquier, he did indeed train, but he secured none of their devotion. It is probable that they perceived that as they rose in the hierarchy they

Digitized by Google

would lose his patronage, and that brilliancy could not, in the long run, be otherwise than distasteful to him. It is strange that jealousy, if jealousy it were, should enter into the composition of so rare a supremacy.

One feature of this attitude was that he was always on his guard, says one who knew him well, against the ambition of his generals. That and popular discontent were what he most feared. So he kept his generals at arm's length, blamed them easily, commended them parsimoniously. It was only the dead, such as Desaix and Kléber, whom he praised with warmth. Thus, except two or three who had known him in his youth, they approached him with fear and trembling. And even these early friends loved him in spite of themselves. Lannes would deplore, between smiles and tears, in Napoleon's presence, his unhappy passion for *cette catin*, and the Emperor would laugh at his rueful tirades, being sure of his Lannes. The awe of the others was not ill-founded. Take, for example, this authentic incident. One day at a levée Napoleon sees St. Cyr, one of his ablest lieutenants. He goes up to him and says, placidly: "General, you come from Naples?" "Yes, Sire, after giving up the command to General Pérignon, whom you had sent to replace me." "You have, no doubt, received the permission of the Minister of War?" "No, Sire, but I had nothing more to do at Naples." "If, within two hours, you are not on the road to Naples, I will have you shot on the plain of Grenelle before noon," replied Napoleon, in the same tranquil tone. He rewarded them with titles and appanages, but not with credit. Indeed, "he would have no glory but his own, he only believed in his own talents."

Digitized by Google

Stendhal, who was a man of genius, and whose opinions are, therefore, worth noting, thinks that one of the two main causes of the fall of the Emperor was this taste for mediocrity. The mediocrity for which Mirabeau is said to have prayed, Napoleon avowedly loved. For of this preference he made no secret. What he wanted was instruments and not ministers. What he feared and disliked was not so much the competition as the ambition and criticism of superior ability. Two men of eminent parts were long in his employment and necessary to his empire. When he discovered that they were considered indispensable to him, his vigilant egotism took alarm, and he got rid of them. It is difficult in all history to cite a personage more infamous and more loathsome than Fouché. But he was a master of those vile arts which despotism requires in a minister of police. He was, in truth, a pestilent instrument which it was equally dangerous to utilize or to neglect. Napoleon did both, a course which combined both disadvantages. Talleyrand, cynical and ignoble as he was in many respects, stands on a higher level, and may find some excuse, not merely in the laxity and exigencies of a revolutionary epoch, but in a cool foresight which gives color to the plea that, while doing his best for himself, he was doing the best for France. That question does not concern us. But, in spite of indolence, and in spite of corruption, he was a consummate foreign minister and an unrivalled diplomatist. Up to the time of the Spanish imbroglio he was Napoleon's close confidant, as he had been one of the earliest associates of his fortunes. Napoleon charged him with advising the policy with regard to Spain and then de-

Digitized by Google

nouncing it. Talleyrand denied the charge. We are inclined to think that both were right. Talleyrand, as we learn from his intimate friend, Mme. de Rémusat, openly declared, and had no doubt advised the Emperor, that "a Bourbon was an inconvenient neighbor to Napoleon, and it was doubtful whether such a neighbor could be tolerated." But he entirely disapproved of Napoleon's proceedings. In a word, he probably gave the impulsion and inspired the idea, while Napoleon found the methods. Possibly something of the same kind occurred with regard to the Enghien affair. The fact, however, that we have to deal with is the rupture, not its cause. For we are persuaded that, had Napoleon been able to retain and work with Talleyrand, his fall would not have taken place. He quarrelled with both Talleyrand and Fouché, and was never able to replace them.

His relations to both these officials throw an instructive light on the cynical side of his character. He grossly and publicly insulted Talleyrand on more than one occasion, outrages in essence and style so intolerable that no man could forgive them. Yet Napoleon in his troubles sent for Talleyrand, and began talking to him confidentially about politics. In the midst of their conversation, Talleyrand calmly remarks, "But, by-the-bye, I thought we had quarrelled." Napoleon dismisses the remark with a "Bah!" Talleyrand, however, had then been long in close relations with Russia, and was not to be won back. Fouché, too, was dismissed with disgrace. He openly hated Napoleon, and passed his exile in intriguing against him. Napoleon was ignorant neither of the hatred nor the intrigues. But in 1815,

Digitized by Google

as we have seen, he whistles him back, and intrusts him with one of the most delicate and important offices at his disposal, the one which gives the best opportunity for betrayal.

Many other causes for his overthrow have been alleged, but, in our judgment, they are ancillary to those that we have cited. And, as a rule, they are, strictly considered, rather effects than causes; it was the causes of his overthrow which produced these disastrous errors. His faults of policy were, no doubt, in his later reign, numerous and obvious enough. But they were not, as is often popularly stated, the causes which effected his ruin, but rather the effects and outcome of the causes which produced his ruin. And this much more must be said in fairness for them, that, viewing them from their political aspect, and putting aside all moral tests, they were grand and not wholly extravagant errors. Life was too short for his plans. The sense of this made him impatient and violent in his proceedings. And so his methods were often petty—not so his policy. His gigantic commercial struggle with England was an impossible effort, but it was one which distinguished economists have, on a smaller scale, often since endeavored to repeat. Nor is it easy to see, in the absence of an efficient fleet, what other weapon was available with which to attack his world-wide enemy. Again, the Spanish expedition was a blunder in method but not necessarily in policy. Louis XIV. had carried out the same policy with conspicuous success. And Napoleon could not foresee that a people which had long supported dynasties so contemptible would rise like one man against his own. Again, the

Digitized by Google

Russian expedition was a blunder, but Russia was the fatal leak in his continental system, and he might well refuse to believe that the Russia, which had succumbed after Friedland, would burn her ancient capital and her secular shrines rather than again submit. Again, the contest with the Pope was a blunder, so grave that some thinkers believe that it mainly contributed to his fall. But it was the blunder of the Holy Roman Emperor and most Catholic King, Charles V., who had aspired to add the sacred crowns of the papacy to his own diadem, and accumulate in his own person all the prerogatives, secular and divine, of supreme authority. Napoleon's methods towards the Holy See were brutal, but Charles sacked Rome.

We have no doubt that Napoleon, after bringing Russia into his system, and crippling or crushing Great Britain, aspired vaguely to becoming in some way Lord Paramount of Europe. We question, however, whether the idea ever assumed actual shape, except in regard to the West, or was ever more than a dream of dominion. He must have known that he could not bequeath so personal a power to his son, but he probably thought that a mere remnant of his empire would be a rich inheritance for his posterity. For himself, he would have outstripped those dead rivals who looked back on him from the page of history, and lured him on; his only rivals, on whom his inner eye was always emulously fixed. And he would have bequeathed a name before which all others would pale, and all future generations yield unquestioned homage.

There is one question which English people ask about great men, which one cannot put with regard

Digitized by Google

to Napoleon without a sense of incongruity which approaches the grotesque. Was Napoleon a good man? The irresistible smile with which we greet the question proves, we think, not the proved iniquity, but the exceptional position of this unique personality. Ordinary measures and tests do not appear to apply to him. We seem to be trying to span a mountain with a tape. In such a creature we expect prodigious virtues and prodigious vices, all beyond our standard. We scarcely remember to have seen this question seriously asked with regard to Napoleon, though Metternich touches on it in a fashion; it seems childish, discordant, superfluous. But asked nakedly in the ordinary sense, without reference to the circumstances of the time, it can admit but of one prompt reply. He was not, of course, good in the sense that Wilberforce or St. Francis was good. Nor was he one of the virtuous rulers: he was not a Washington or an Antonine. Somewhere or another he has said that he could not have achieved what he did had he been religious, and this is undoubtedly true. In England his name was a synonym for the author of all evil. He was, indeed, in our national judgment, a devil seven times worse than the others. But then we knew nothing at all about him. He, had he been himself asked the question and understood it, would at once have discriminated between the public and the private man. He would have said that private morality had nothing to do with statecraft, and that statecraft, if it had a morality at all, had a morality of its own. His own morals, he would have said, and indeed thought, were extremely creditable to so altogether exceptional a being. To use a common vul-

Digitized by Google

garism, he was not, we think, so black as he is painted. The tone of his age, the accepted and special latitude accorded to monarchs in the eighteenth century, the circumstances and temptations of his position must be taken into account. Men must judge men not absolutely but relatively, as they would themselves be judged. Circumstance, epoch, environment, training, temptation, must all be taken into account if you would test the virtues of mankind. An abstinent man when starving will choke himself with a meal from which a glutton would shrink. A temperate man in extreme weakness will swallow without injury draughts of brandy which would drown a drunkard. And so with Napoleon. His lot was not cast in a monastery or in a pulpit. He came from Corsica a little pagan, viewing the world as his oyster. He was reared in the life of camps and in the terrors of revolution. He was raised to rule a nation, which, in the horrors of a great convulsion, had formally renounced and practically abjured Christianity. He had to fight for his own hand against the whole world. It was breathless work which gave little time for reflection.

What he said of religion we have seen. What he thought of religion we do not know. He grasped, no doubt, its political force. He would have understood the military value of the loyal piety of the Tyrolese, or the stern fanaticism of the Covenanters. That he deemed religion essential to a nation he proved by his bold achievement of the concordat. It is clear, too, that he thought the same of morality, of the sanctity of the family, of public and even private virtue. He was never weary of inculcating them. But it never even occurred to him that these

Digitized by Google

rules were applicable to himself, for he soon regarded himself as something apart from ordinary men. He did not scruple to avow his conviction. "I am not a man like other men," he would say; "the laws of morality and decorum could not be intended to apply to me." He was, it may be fairly alleged, indulgent and affectionate to his family, particularly in his first, better years; dutiful to his mother; kind to his early friends. He wished to be a good husband according to his lights. He would have cherished his son had he been allowed. He was a tender brother in his early years, especially to Louis, who rewarded him by the grossest suspicions of a hypochondriac. He was free from the sordid cares of personal wealth or personal avarice. He was quick to wrath, but, according to the best and keenest judges, easily appeased. "Always kind, patient, and indulgent," says Méneval. Mme. de Rémusat, a hostile and observant chronicler, narrates several instances of his consideration and tenderness, as well as of his susceptibility to the pleading fondness of Josephine. Mme. de Rémusat witnessed in 1806 a scene of almost hysterical and insurmountable emotion when Napoleon embraced Talleyrand and Josephine, declaring that it was hard to part from the two people that one loved the most; and, utterly unable to control himself, fell into strong convulsions. This was no comedy. There was nothing to gain. It was the sudden and passionate assertion of his heart.

But, it must be admitted, this was an exceptional case. In the final deteriorated phase of his character there is no trace of friendship. In one or two instances he may have felt it. But he had no friends.

Digitized by Google

Duroc most nearly approached to that intimate character. Napoleon, on assuming the crown, had bade Duroc continue to call him "thou," a rare if not a singular privilege. Duroc he called his conscience. From Duroc he was said to have no secrets. But Duroc stood alone. Great masses, who knew him only in his public capacity, chiefly as a general, adored him to the last. The private soldiers who marched from France to Waterloo were inspired with an enthusiasm for him which at least equalled that of the soldiers at Marengo or Austerlitz. But that enthusiasm diminished in proportion to remoteness from the rank and file. Officers felt it less in an ascending scale, and when the summit was reached it was no longer perceptible. It had long since ceased to be felt by those who knew the Emperor most intimately. Friendship, as we have seen, he had deliberately discarded as too close a relation for other mortals to bear to himself. Many, too, of his early friends had died on the field of battle, friends such as Lannes, Desaix, and Duroc. But some had survived and left him without ceremony, or even decency. Berthier, his life-long comrade, the messmate of his campaigns, his confidant, deserted him without a word, and did not blush to become captain of Louis XVIII.'s bodyguard. His marshals, the companions of his victories, all left him at Fontainebleau, some with contumely. Ney insulted him in 1814, Davoust in 1815. Marmont, the petted child of his favor, conspicuously betrayed him. The loyal Caulaincourt found a limit to his devotion at last. Even his body attendants, Constant and Rustan, the valet who always tended him, and the Mameluke who slept against his door, abandoned him. It was dif-

Digitized by Google

ficult to collect a handful of officers to accompany him to Elba, much more difficult to find a few for St. Helena. The hopeless followers of ungrateful masters, the chief mourners of misfortune who haunted the barren antechambers of the Bourbons and the Stuarts, had no counterpart in the exile of Napoleon. We need not reproach a nation, for that nation found many faithful adherents for their ancient kings. Moreover, his wife, who left him without a sigh, who wrote, when under his roof, that she was only happy by his side, and who, after his death, wrote that she had never felt any real affection for him, was an Austrian. We must regretfully attribute this alienation, discreditable as it is to the deserters, as more discreditable to Napoleon himself. Bertrand, as we have seen, who, if alone, can claim the halo of fidelity, avowed the truth at St. Helena, not in anger, but in sorrow: "The Emperor is what he is; we cannot change his character. It is because of that character that he has no friends, that he has so many enemies, and, indeed, that we are at St. Helena."

And yet we must not distribute this judgment over his whole career; it applies only to that part of it which was essentially imperial and partially insane. Until he chose to make a demigod of himself, and deliberately cut himself off from humanity, he was kind, generous, and affectionate; at any rate, if that be too partial a judgment, he was certainly not the reverse.

But in the full swell of his career it would never have crossed his mind that these attributes, any more than veracity or sympathy, had any relation to him. They were right and proper for others, but for him something more or something less was required.

Digitized by Google

They were qualities for mere men; and the ordinary restraints, like the ordinary objects, of mere men had ceased to have any meaning for him.

Was he a great man? That is a much simpler question, but it involves definitions. If by "great" be intended the combination of moral qualities with those of intellect, great he certainly was not. But that he was great in the sense of being extraordinary and supreme we can have no doubt. If greatness stands for natural power, for predominance, for something human beyond humanity, then Napoleon was assuredly great. Besides that indefinable spark which we call genius, he represents a combination of intellect and energy which has never perhaps been equalled, never, certainly, surpassed. He carried human faculty to the farthest point of which we have accurate knowledge. Alexander is a remote prodigy, too remote for precise comparison. To Cæsar the same objection is applicable. Homer and Shakespeare are impersonal names. Besides, we need for comparison men of action and business. Of all these great figures, it may be said that we do not know enough. But Napoleon lived under the modern microscope. Under the fiercest glare of scrutiny he enlarged indefinitely the limits of human conception and human possibility. Till he had lived no one could realize that there could be so stupendous a combination of military and civil genius, such comprehension of view united to such grasp of detail, such prodigious vitality of body and mind. "He contracts history," said Mme. d'Houdetot, "and expands imagination." "He has thrown a doubt," said Lord Dudley, "on all past glory; he has made all future renown impossible." This is

Digitized by Google

hyperbole, but with a substance of truth. No name represents so completely and conspicuously dominion, splendor, and catastrophe. He raised himself by the use, and ruined himself by the abuse, of superhuman faculties. He was wrecked by the extravagance of his own genius. No less powers than those which had effected his rise could have achieved his fall.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX

1. CAPTAIN MAITLAND

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, when he came on board the *Bellerophon*, on the 15th of July, 1815, wanted exactly one month of completing his forty-sixth year, being born the 15th of August, 1769. He was then a remarkably strong, well-built man, about five feet seven inches high, his limbs particularly well formed, with a fine ankle and very small foot, of which he seemed rather vain, as he always wore while on board the ship silk stockings and shoes. His hands were also very small, and had the plumpness of a woman's rather than the robustness of a man's. His eyes light gray, teeth good; and when he smiled the expression of his countenance was highly pleasing; when under the influence of disappointment, however, it assumed a dark, gloomy cast. His hair was of a very dark brown, nearly approaching to black, and, though a little thin on the top and front, had not a gray hair among it. His complexion was a very uncommon one, being of a light sallow color, differing from almost any other I ever met with. From his having become corpulent, he had lost much of his personal activity, and, if we are to give credit to those who attended him, a very considerable portion of his mental energy was also gone. . . . His general appearance was that of a man rather older than he then was. His manners were extremely pleasing and affable: he joined in every conversation, related numerous

Digitized by Google

anecdotes, and endeavored, in every way, to promote good-humor: he even admitted his attendants to great familiarity; and I saw one or two instances of their contradicting him in the most direct terms, though they generally treated him with much respect. He possessed, to a wonderful degree, a facility in making a favorable impression upon those with whom he entered into conversation: this appeared to me to be accomplished by turning the subject to matters he supposed the person he was addressing was well acquainted with, and on which he could show himself to advantage.

2. SENHOUSE

July 15, 1815.

His person I was very desirous of seeing, and I felt disappointed. His figure is very bad; he is short, with a large head, his hands and legs small, and his body so corpulent as to project very considerably. His coat, made very plain, as you see it in most prints, from being very short in the back, gives his figure a more ridiculous appearance. His profile is good, and is exactly what his busts and portraits represent; but his full face is bad. His eyes are a light blue, with a light yellow tinge on the iris, heavy, and totally contrary to what I expected; his teeth are bad; but the expression of his countenance is versatile, and expressive beyond measure of the quick and varying passions of the mind. His face at one instant bears the stamp of great good-humor, and immediately changes to a dark, penetrating, thoughtful scowl, which denotes the character of the thought that excites it.

3. BUNBURY

July 31, 1815.

Napoleon appears to be about five feet six inches high. His make is very stout and muscular. His neck is short,

Digitized by Google

and his head rather large; it is particularly square and full about the jaw, and he has a good deal of double chin. He is bald about the temples, and the hair on the upper part of his head is very thin, but long and ragged, looking as if it were seldom brushed. In the management of his limbs Napoleon is ungraceful; but he used very little gesture, and the carriage of his head is dignified. He is fat, and his belly projects; but this is rendered more apparent by the make of his coat, which has very short lapels turned back, and it is hooked tight over the breast to the pit of the stomach, and is there cut suddenly away, leaving a great display of white waistcoat. He wore a green uniform with scarlet collar and scarlet edging to the lapels, but without lace or embroidery; small gilt buttons, and gold epaulettes. He had a white neckcloth, white waistcoat and breeches, silk stockings, and shoes with small gilt buckles. A very small old-fashioned sword, with a worked gold hilt, was buckled tight to his hip. He wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor over his waistcoat, and the star, in silver embroidery, on his coat. There were also three very small orders hanging together at one of his button-holes. His hat, which he carried most of the time under his arm, was rather large, quite plain, and having an *extremely small* tricolor cockade. Napoleon took snuff frequently during the interview; the box was not showy; it was rather long, and appeared to have four coins or medals set in its top.

* * * * * * *

Napoleon's eyes are gray, the pupils large; not much eyebrow; hair brown; complexion sallow, and the flesh sodden. His nose is finely formed, his upper lip very short, and the mouth beautiful. His teeth are bad and dirty, but he shows them very little. The general character of his countenance was grave and almost mel-

Digitized by Google

ancholy; but no trace of severity or violent passion was allowed to appear. I have seldom seen a man of stronger make, or better fitted to endure fatigue.

4. LADY MALCOLM

June 25, 1816. . . . The following is Lady Malcolm's idea of his figure: His hair of a brown-black, thin on the forehead, cropped, but not thin in the neck, and rather a dirty look; light blue or gray eyes; a capacious forehead; high nose; short upper lip; good white even teeth, but small (he rarely showed them); round chin; the lower part of his face very full; pale complexion; particularly short neck. Otherwise his figure appeared well proportioned, but had become too fat; a thick, short hand, with taper fingers and beautiful nails, and a well-shaped leg and foot. He was dressed in an old threadbare green coat, with green velvet collar and cuffs; silver buttons with a beast engraven upon them, his *habit de chasse* (it was buttoned close at the neck); a silver star of the Legion of Honor; white waistcoat and breeches; white silk stockings; and shoes with oval gold buckles. She was struck with the kindness of his expression, so contrary to the fierceness she had expected. She saw no trace of great ability; his countenance seemed rather to indicate goodness. . . .

5. HENRY

Sept. 1, 1817.

He was dressed in a plain dark green uniform coat without epaulettes, or anything equivalent, but with the star of the Legion of Honor on the breast, which had an eagle in the centre. The buttons were gold, with the device of a mounted dragoon in high relief. He had on white breeches and silk stockings, and oval gold buckles in

Digitized by Google

his shoes; with a small opera hat under his arm. Napoleon's first appearance was far from imposing, the stature was short and thick, his head sunk into the shoulders, his face fat, with large folds under the chin; the limbs appeared to be stout and well proportioned, complexion olive, expression sinister, forbidding, and rather scowling. The features instantly reminded us of the prints of him which we had seen. On the whole his general look was more that of an obese Spanish or Portuguese friar than the hero of modern times. . . .

A fascinating prestige, which we had cherished all our lives, then vanished like gossamer in the sun. The great Napoleon had merged in an unsightly and obese individual; and we looked in vain for that overwhelming power of eye and force of expression, which we had been taught to expect by a delusive imagination.

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

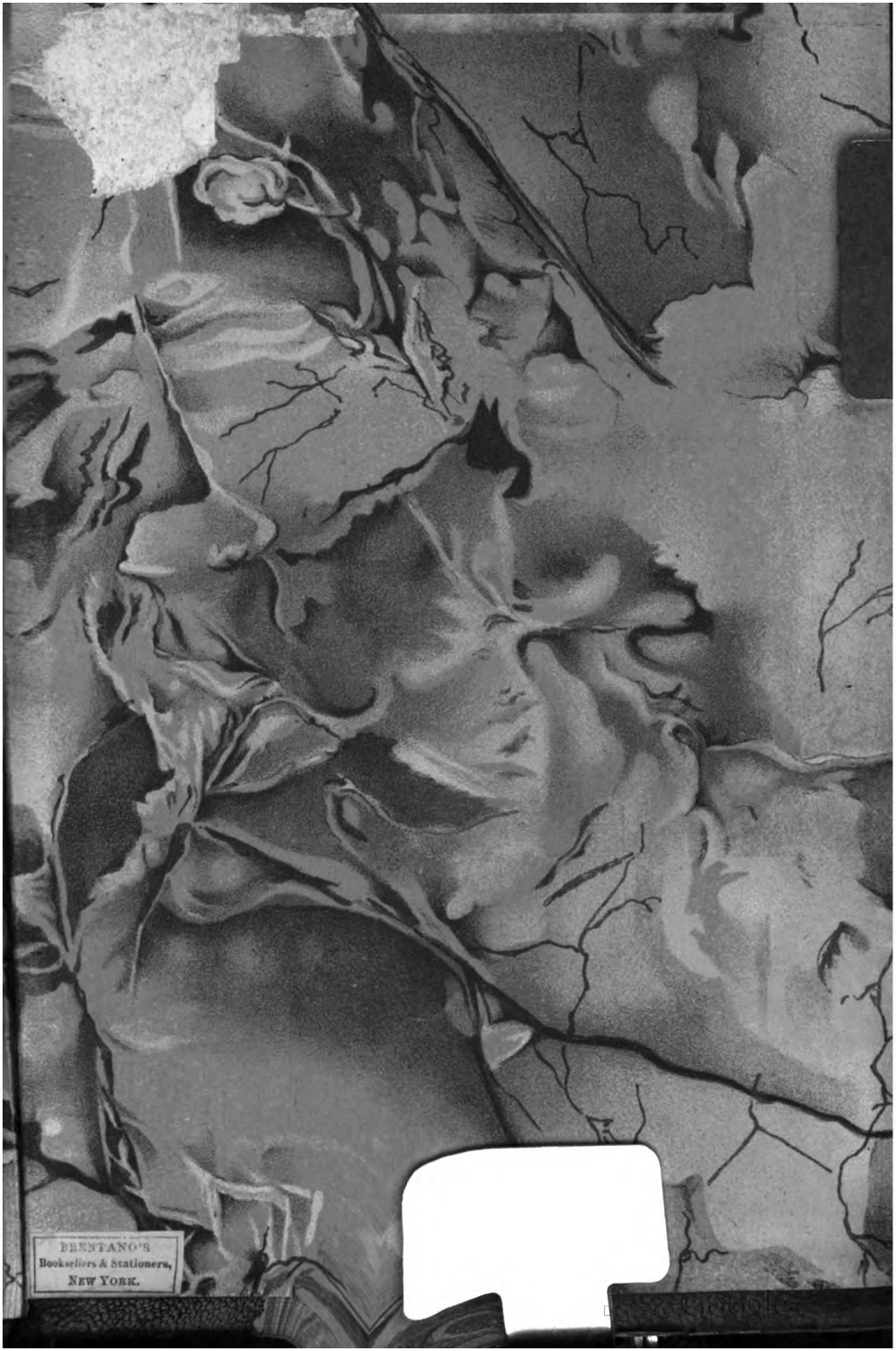
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


BRENTANO'S
Booksellers & Stationers,
NEW YORK.

Digitized by Google